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THE STORY TO BE TOLD OF THE END OF THE LINE:

SUICIDE IN A WESTERN AMERICAN CITY,

BUTTE, MONTANA, 1907-1914

by

Trudy Irene Scee

B.A., University of Montana, 1985

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

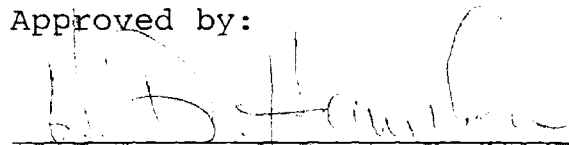
for the degree of

Master of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1988

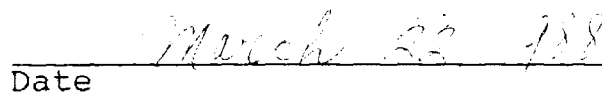
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History

The Story to be Told of the End of the Line: Suicide in a Western American City, Butte, Montana, 1907-1914 (107 pp.)

Director: H. Duane Hampton



In the early twentieth century, America--particularly the American West--held forth a promise of personal prosperity and independence to those willing to labor diligently in their chosen fields of endeavor--a promise America continues to hold during the present day. The systematic study of suicide in Butte, Montana, one community from which analogies to the broader American culture may be drawn, reveals certain specific and important facets of the Westering experience and the American covenant.

A minimum of 155 Butte men and women took their lives during the eight-year period of January 1907 through December 1914. The actual number of suicides appears to have been much greater. At its lowest rate of 42.3 (based on 155 deaths), Butte exceeded the general United States suicide rate by over two and one-half times and more than doubled the national urban suicide rate. Self-immolation during the period examined tended to be urban--with the highest rates reported for the largest cities--and Western. The West consistently surpassed other regions of the nation in suicide rates per 100,000 population. Yet, even when Butte's urban status and geographical location are taken into consideration, the city's 1907-1914 suicide rate remains amazingly high.

An in-depth examination of self-destruction in Butte reveals that external factors--such as climate, holidays, mine shutdowns, and labor strife--did not significantly affect the city's suicide rate. Statistical evidence suggests that day-to-day economic distress, poor health, and overcrowded, unhealthy, and often impersonal living conditions accounted for much of the suicide rate. Although individual motives for suicide varied, hopelessness was common to them all.

The overwhelming majority of the Butte suicides had come either from other parts of America or from other nations. Butte and the West did not meet their expectations. These people had travelled to the end of the line and found only disappointment and despair. For the Butte suicides the American Promise had evolved into the American Lie.

For Michelle Marie Galvin,
and with gratitude to my "Sirs"
and to Julie

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PROLOGUE

"I had expected this feeling to come on me, but I have always fought it off, but you never knew at what cost or what I suffered, for I never told you."

From the suicide note of
George Goodchild who died
February 1, 1911¹

INTRODUCTION

John Heylin came to Montana in 1862. He placer mined first in Bannack and then in Alder Gulch. At the end of the decade Heylin began a career of professional faro dealing, a vocation which brought him recognition in Helena, Anaconda, and Butte, Montana. The year 1907 found him impoverished, ill and despondent in Butte, his home of the past few years. He wrote to a friend in Nevada asking for assistance and hoped to move to Nevada himself. Instead of assistance he received word that his friend was dead. Then John Heylin wrote another letter, this one to his friend Nick, explaining his situation and requesting one last favor of Nick and another intimate, to "rustle the money and bury me" as together they had "helped to bury many a poor devil." Soon after finishing the letter Heylin took laudanum in an upper room of the M&M Saloon. He never regained consciousness.²

Thirteen-year-old Della Gertrude Moyle was withheld from school to help care for her sisters after their father died. On December 8, 1907 Della's mother sent her on an errand. Della chose to go to a neighbor's house instead. Scolded for misconduct Della was sent on another errand. This time she went to a store but purchased something different than that which her mother had requested. Upon

returning home Della headed straight for an outbuilding. There in a corner she drank down her twenty-five cent purchase. When her mother came searching for Della Gertrude she found her dying from the effects of carbolic acid. Eight months later Mrs. Moyle held another girl in her arms. Della's older sister, Ida May, had swallowed twenty-five cents worth of laudanum in the outhouse and died a short while later.³

On Thursday morning, April 30, 1908, twenty-three-year-old Hattie Wallace swallowed almost the entire contents of a bottle of bichloride of mercury antiseptic tablets in her room in the red-light district of Butte, Montana. Ordinarily a few grams of the poison caused near instantaneous death, but Hattie Wallace lived on in agony for five more days. She died in the arms of a nun in the Saint James Hospital on May 5. After her death authorities discovered her true identity: Mrs. Louise Armstrong, a twenty-eight-year-old woman brought to Butte by an unknown man, put in the restricted district by him, and then abandoned. Armstrong's body was shipped to her former home--Oakland, California--for burial.⁴

On Saturday night, September 15 of the same year, Mary Bosanko wished her husband good-bye as he left for work, headed to a downtown drugstore, and purchased a vial of carbolic acid. The thirty-eight-year-old woman prepared herself for bed, poured the acid into a cup, and drank it in

one swallow. Less than a minute later one of her three daughters entered the room and urged her mother to spit up the poison. "I can't, it's gone, and I'm not sorry. I wish I had died seven months ago. I'm no good anymore," the mother replied and then sank into unconsciousness. She died within the hour, her face badly burned by splattered acid. Mrs. Bosanko had been sick almost continually for the previous seven months, hospitalized for several of them, and could no longer perform her household duties.⁵

Palmer Paulson, an unmarried forty-year-old Butte laborer from Norway, put on his hat and walked out of the house of a long-time friend in the early hours of March 12, 1909. A hundred feet away from the house Paulson lay on the ground, placed one arm under his abdomen, and waited for the 6:38 Burlington train. His head, carefully placed over the railroad track, was carried two hundred feet by the train. His body, no longer afflicted by the intense pain--probably caused by neuralgia--which had forced him to leave his most recent job, remained where he had placed it.⁶

Four months after Paulson's death, twenty-nine-year-old Philip O'Connell left the breakfast table at his sister's house and headed for the Meaderville home where his wife of one year, Della, lived with her parents. The couple had been separated for three weeks, and Philip O'Connell possessed an unreasonable amount of jealousy. (O'Connell had also recently been traumatized by his presence at the

exhuming of his brother's corpse. His brother had been buried unidentified after being struck by a train.) Arriving after some delay at his wife's residence at one o'clock p.m., O'Connell began arguing with Della's mother. He then pulled out a .38 caliber Smith and Wesson, fired a shot at his mother-in-law which missed its target, turned on his wife who lay sick in bed, shot her in the head, punched her in the face, then turned the gun on himself and fired a bullet into his brain. The bodies were taken to separate funeral parlors.⁷

Twenty-two-year-old Thomas Kilgallon, Jr. suffered ill health and felt despondent. He quit his job as a machinist at the Stewart mine and planned to leave Butte. Two weeks later on August 2, 1910, he arrived home at 10:30 p.m., told his mother he was going away (she thought he was referring to a contemplated trip to Seattle), asked her for a kiss, embraced her fondly, and went upstairs. Kilgallon entered the bathroom, took up a four-ounce bottle of carbolic acid, and drank half of its contents. His father heard him groaning, climbed into the bathroom through a window via the roof after finding the door locked, picked up his son and carried him to a nearby bed. Four sisters survived Thomas Kilgallon.⁸

Mrs. Margaret Whitford also suffered from poor health. After informing her miner husband that she would be into bed shortly, the twenty-seven-year-old woman from the Isle of

Man took off her outer skirt, then poured a gallon of coal oil over the rest of her clothing and set it afire. Her husband and children did what they could to ease her suffering. She died sixteen hours later, on July 14, 1911, in Butte's Saint James Hospital.⁹

On September 11, 1911, Rose Wilhelm gave ample notice of her intentions, yet her companion in the red-light district still found herself unable to prevent a tragedy. When Rose Wilhelm's self-appointed hour of death came she walked to her dresser, picked up a glass, raised it in a toast, said, "Here's luck to you, Edna," and quickly drank her carbolic acid. Rose Wilhelm blamed her lover of two years for her death--which she greeted with a smile. After ascertaining the woman's true name the authorities notified her mother. The woman's return message stated that she would neither acknowledge nor bury the body. Friends of the deceased responded by buying her a white coffin and offering to pay all expenses. The twenty-four-year-old woman was buried under her assumed name with her official occupation being recorded as that of a nurse.¹⁰

On July 13, 1912, Andrew Luoma, a thirty-five-year-old Finn, borrowed ten dollars from his wife. He had been suffering from miner's consumption and his feet were so badly swollen that he had to wear rubbers instead of shoes. Illness had also forced him from work that November. Luoma purchased a .38 caliber revolver, took the Englewood

streetcar to the end of the line, walked to an obscure location, sat down, and shot a bullet through his brain.¹¹

Three months after Andrew Luoma's death the Butte city police arrested thirty-five-year-old Dennis Ryan, an out-of-work Irish miner, on a disturbance charge. A woman he had formerly boarded with accused him of attempting to kill her teenage son. Soon after entering the city jail, Ryan sat down on the lower bunk in his cell, told his fellow inmate, Tom Wheatly, that he expected to be released before long, took up a short piece of broom wire, informed Wheatly that he intended to sleep, and climbed to the upper bunk. After Wheatly moved to the front of the cell to read, Dennis Ryan wrapped one end of the broom wire around his neck, carefully attached the other end to a nearby steam pipe, and slid out of the bunk. Wheatly turned and discovered the corpse a few minutes later.¹²

Fifty-year-old James Snow, a Butte solicitor for the Leslie-Judge Publishing Company, entered the Black Eagle Saloon in Helena, Montana, on April 21, 1913, walked to a back room, and drank carbolic acid. He died before assistance reached him.¹³

Miner's consumption left Josiah Tippet with one partially paralyzed arm, and his physician informed him that he would not live out the winter. Tippet's wife tried to cheer him up but failed. When she went outside to sweep snow off the sidewalk on September 23, 1913, Josiah Tippet

slit his throat open with a razor.¹⁴

Four days after Tippet's death, Mrs. Alonzo Holmes stepped outside to sweep the snow off her backsteps. While she was thus occupied her husband, a streetcar man for the past seventeen years, placed a .38 caliber Iver Johnson revolver against his right temple and fired. Death came to him quickly.¹⁵

Death proved more elusive for thirty-five-year-old Nick Klosna. Having spent all but \$2.20 of his money in an attempt to cure himself of a persistent disease, Klosna decided to die. On May 17, 1914 he shot himself above the heart, then tried to hang himself with a pair of suspenders. These acts resulted in hospitalization. While hospitalized Klosna resisted treatment by pounding his head against the wall, ripping off his bandages, and trying to secure a glass of poison. After a five-day stay and a promise to deter from future suicide attempts, Klosna was released from the hospital on May 23. He promptly walked four miles to Rocker, Montana. There, in a sawmill, Klosna threw a rope over a beam, stood on an oilcan, slipped the noose around his neck, and kicked away the can. Nick Klosna finally succeeded in his plans.¹⁶

Tomo Pipi worked hard in the Butte mines, saved his money, invested in land in Croatia with two cousins, and married a widow with three children. Only thirty-one years old life may have seemed to be progressing favorably. It

quickly regressed, however. Papi received a message disclaiming his rights and interests in the Croatian property. Papi's wife and the lawyer he consulted worried about Papi's mental strain. On October 8, 1914 Papi went to see a physician, ostensibly to secure medicine. Without warning Papi left his seat in the waiting room, opened a window, stepped out on its ledge, and jumped out. He landed on the sidewalk one hundred feet below and died a half hour later.¹⁷

Only a few of the many suicides committed in Butte, Montana, from January 1907 through December 1914, are represented above. During this eight-year period more than 155 Butte men and women took their own lives. Each instance of self-immolation is, in one aspect or another, a human tragedy in itself; as portions of a continual saga of human sufferings that culminated in self-destruction, they formed part of a historical, social phenomenon deserving the attention and remembrance of succeeding generations--generations who themselves have not solved the problem of needless self-immolation. Illuminating the suicides of Butte may shed a bit of diffused light on those of our own day. For the stories of these people speak not only of their own lives but also of their families, friends, community, state and nation in a time that is not yet so distant from our own.

America, and in particular the American West, held

forth a promise in the early twentieth century of personal prosperity and independence to those willing to labor diligently in their chosen fields of endeavor--a promise America continues to hold forth during the present day. The systematic study of suicide in Butte, one community from which analogies to the broader American culture may be drawn, reveals certain specific and important facets of the Westering experience and the American covenant.

PART ONE

The early years of the twentieth century witnessed a worldwide augmentation of suicide rates. Authorities in both the eastern and the western hemispheres reported unprecedented rates of self-destruction. Suicide occurred most frequently in terms of total population in contemporary Saxony, Germany, Prussia, France, Switzerland, Austria, and Japan; least frequently in Ireland, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Italy, Finland, England, and Wales; and to a middling degree in the United States, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Hungary, Belgium, and Australia. Average suicides per 100,000 population for the year 1906 through the mid-1910s ranged as follows:¹⁸

| <u>Region or Nation</u> | <u>Rate</u> |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Saxony | in excess of 31 (31-36) |
| ----- | ----- |
| Germany | |
| France | 21 through mid-20s |
| Prussia | |
| Switzerland | |
| ----- | ----- |
| Prussia | |
| Japan | high teens through low 20s |
| Austria | |
| Denmark | |
| ----- | ----- |
| Sweden | |
| Australia | mid to high teens |
| Hungary | |
| ----- | ----- |
| United States | |
| Bavaria | mid-teens |
| New Zealand | |

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Canada | average rate unknown |
| Australia | |
| Belgium | 10 to mid-teens |
| Finland | |
| England and Wales | 8 to 12 |
| Italy | less than 9 |
| Netherlands | less than 8 |
| Norway | less than 7 |
| Spain | |
| Portugal | less than 6 |
| Scotland | |
| Ireland | less than 4 |

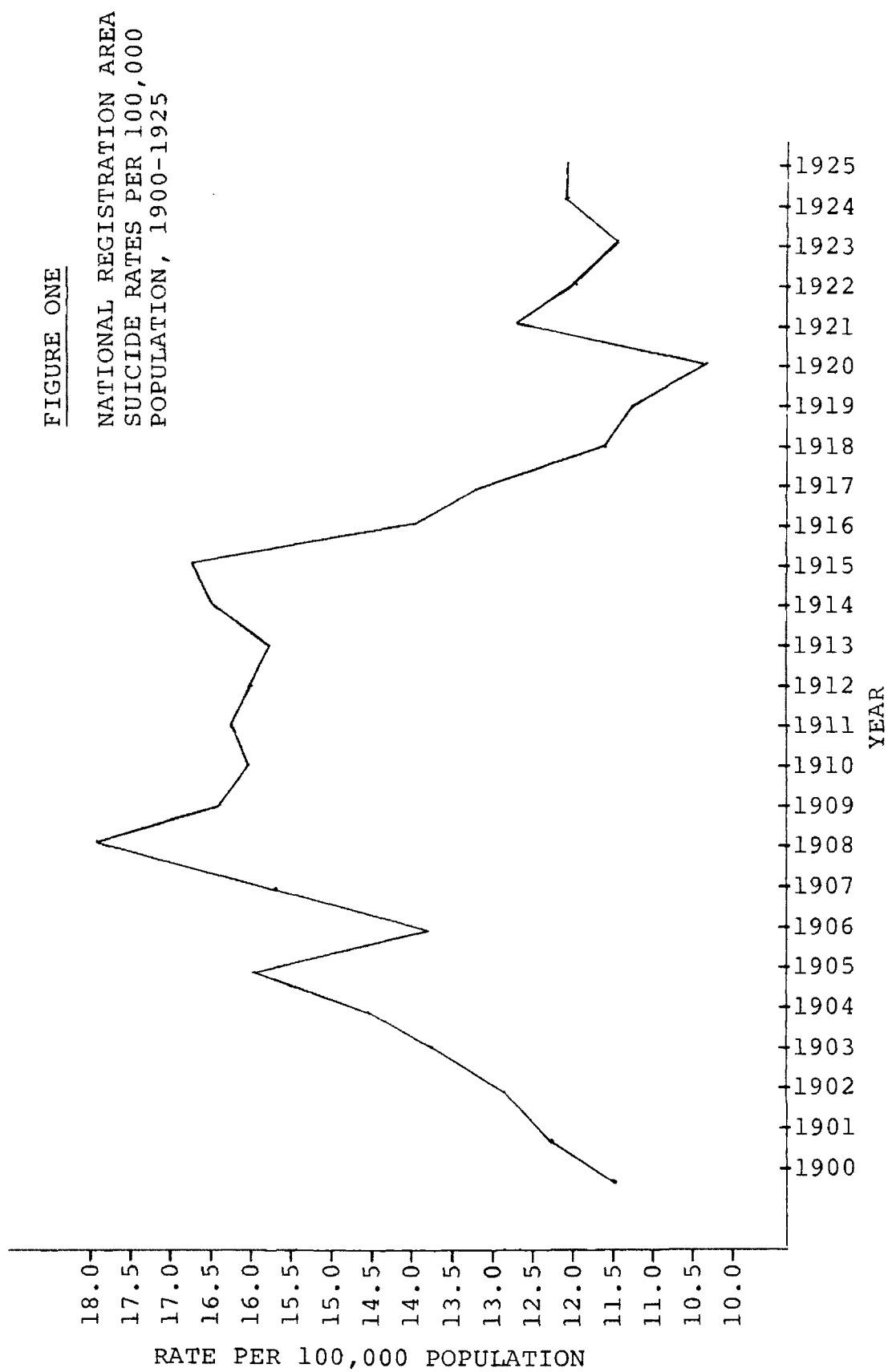
The majority of these rates represented an increase over rates a decade earlier,¹⁹ and for all places except Norway and Denmark represented substantial increases in suicide during the previous century.²⁰ One scholar noted that although the population of Europe increased 60 percent from 1835 to 1895, suicide increased during the same period in Europe 400 percent.²¹

In the United States too the growth of suicide seemed to outpace that of population, although computations are difficult to make on a broad basis due to the continual spread of the United States Census registration area²² (the registration area being comprised of those states and cities whose mortality record keeping methods the Census Bureau deemed acceptable). The U.S. registration area of 1900 included approximately 26 percent of the nation's population

but in terms of land area included only ten states and the District of Columbia. In 1907 the registration area included 49 percent of the population and 21 percent of the land area, and in 1914 it comprised 67 percent of the population and 42 percent of the land area.²³ Cities frequently joined the registration area before their native states did due to more efficient methods of recording and classifying deaths. By 1914 twenty-five states, plus cities in twelve others and the District of Columbia, belonged to the census registration area.²⁴

Plotting the suicide rate of the United States registration area discloses a definite trend in suicidal frequency for the first quarter of the twentieth century. Suicide increased fairly steadily from 1900 until it peaked in 1908. Thereafter the rate remained high, with slight fluctuations until about 1915 when it began a downward path. The suicide rate bottomed in 1920 then increased somewhat and remained generally steady for the next few years. Thus, during the period with which this study is concerned, 1907 through 1914, America possessed a relatively high and steady national suicide rate (see figure 1 on the following page).²⁵

The suicide rate, however, was not uniform throughout the United States. One of the most obvious variations in the self-immolation rate, and one which the Census Bureau methodically tabulated, was that between rural and urban



areas. Suicide on a national basis tended to be an urban phenomenon. The yearly number of urban suicides in the entire registration area of the United States Census consistently exceeded those of rural areas. (The Census Bureau designated those municipalities with 10,000 or more inhabitants as cities.) For 1907 through 1914 the total yearly number of city suicides varied from between 1.5 and 2.6 times that of rural suicides, with the average for the eight-year period being 1.52.²⁶ In terms of suicide per 100,000 population the pattern basically repeats itself. Rates of self-destruction in American cities varied yearly from 18.1 to 20.4 per 100,000 population, the average for the period being 19.03. American rural areas averaged 12.76 suicides per 100,000, with yearly rates varying between 12.1 and 14.4.²⁷ On the average the suicide rate per 100,000 population for urban areas was 1.49 times that for rural areas. This difference in rate can readily be seen in figure 2. In summary, during 1907-1914 both the actual number and the rate per 100,000 population of American city dwellers who committed suicide roughly equalled or exceeded one and one-half times that of American country dwellers.²⁸

However, one must not assume that the rural versus urban suicide phenomenon confined itself to the United States. In virtually all the countries of the world for which authorities reported suicides the rates for urban suicides exceeded those of rural suicides. Only Scotland

FIGURE TWO

NATIOAL SUICIDE RATES
PER 100,000 POPULATION

YEAR

RATE PER 100,000 POPULATION

reported the reverse.²⁹ Table 1, a listing of the largest contemporary cities in the world, indicates how international urban areas compared in terms of suicide rates and how these rates differed from those of their native lands, where known, as previously given.³⁰

One of the most notable features shown here is that although the United States ranked median in suicide rates as a nation, her larger cities had some of the highest urban self-destruction rates in the world. Indeed, suicide in terms of population occurred more frequently in San Francisco than in any other large city on the globe. St. Louis possessed the seventh highest international rate and Denver the tenth.³¹

The rank of the largest American cities in terms of suicide rate was not coincidental. Just as the frequency of self-destruction varied markedly between rural and urban areas in the United States, it varied regionally. (Regionality factored in suicide rates in other parts of the world also.³²) Dividing the nation into four regions and examining their suicide rates in general (urban and rural combined), the Southern states possessed quite low suicide rates and the Western states very high ones in comparison to the Eastern and Central states.³³ According to the Census Bureau, Western states consistently ranked highest in suicides per 100,000 population. For the years 1910,³⁴ 1911, and 1913, California, Montana, and Colorado ranked

Table 1

Suicide Rates for Contemporary Cities (International)

| <u>Contemporary Nation/City</u> | <u>Period</u> | <u>Suicide Rate</u> |
|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| United States | | |
| San Francisco | 1904-1913 | 48.0 |
| St. Louis | " " | 32.8 |
| Denver | " " | 29.8 |
| Chicago | " " | 21.7 |
| New Orleans | " " | 18.7 |
| Cleveland | " " | 18.6 |
| New York City | " " | 17.8 |
| Baltimore | " " | 16.7 |
| Boston | " " | 16.2 |
| Philadelphia | " " | 16.2 |
| Germany | | |
| Leipzig | 1909-1913 | 37.9 |
| Hamburg | 1904-1913 | 36.0 |
| Berlin | " " | 34.3 |
| Dresden | " " | 34.0 |
| Frankfort | " " | 32.7 |
| Munich | 1903-1912 | 21.5 |
| Sweden/Stockholm | " " | 33.0 |
| Austria/Vienna | " " | 30.5 |
| Belgium/Brussels | " " | 28.5 |
| Belgium/Antwerp | " " | 15.4 |
| Switzerland/Zurich | " " | 28.2 |
| Switzerland/Basel | " " | 17.5 |
| Argentine Republic/Buenos Aires | 1904-1913 | 27.2 |
| Denmark/Copenhagen | 1903-1912 | 27.1 |
| France/Paris | 1902-1911 | 25.5 |
| Cuba/Havana | 1903-1912 | 23.0 |
| Italy/Milan | " " | 22.7 |
| Italy/Rome | 1904-1912 | 21.6 |
| Italy/Naples | 1903-1912 | 10.8 |
| Brazil/Rio de Janeiro | 1904-1913 | 16.0 |
| Japan/Tokyo | 1904-1912 | 15.8 |
| Australia/Sydney | 1904-1913 | 13.2 |
| Australia/Melbourne & suburbs | " " | 10.8 |
| Russia/Moscow | 1903-1912 | 12.9 |
| Spain/Madrid | 1901-1910 | 12.3 |

Table 1 (continued)

| <u>Contemporary Nation/City</u> | <u>Period</u> | <u>Suicide Rate</u> |
|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| England | | |
| London | 1904-1913 | 11.4 |
| Birmingham | " " | 10.4 |
| Manchester | " " | 9.7 |
| Liverpool | " " | 7.2 |
| Scotland/Edinburgh | 1905-1913 | 9.4 |
| India/Calcutta | 1904-1913 | 9.3 |
| Holland/Amsterdam | " " | 7.6 |
| Norway/Christiania | 1903-1912 | 7.1 |
| Canada/Toronto | 1904-1913 | 5.5 |
| Canada/Montreal | " " | 4.3 |
| Uruguay/Montevideo | 1903-1912 | 5.0 |
| Ireland/Belfast | 1904-1913 | 4.6 |
| Ireland/Dublin | " " | 3.3 |
| Mexico/Mexico City | 1905-1913 | 2.2 |
| Philippine Islands/Manila | 1904-1913 | 2.0 |

highest, in that order. In 1912 California ranked first, Washington second, and Montana third. In 1914 California retained its position as the state with the highest suicide rate; however, Montana and Washington switched places, with Montana possessing the second highest rate of suicide. Washington ranked fourth in 1910 and 1911, and in 1913 Utah secured that position with Washington coming in fifth.³⁵

Comparing specifically urban areas on a regional basis yields more definitive conclusions. Of 65 contemporary American cities with populations exceeding 100,000 persons, 9 out of 29 Eastern cities (or 31 percent) surpassed the national urban registration area 16.7 suicide rate for 1911-1920; 14 of 18 Central cities (or 77 percent) surpassed the national urban rate; 8 out of 9 (or 88 percent) of the Southern cities did so; and a full 100 percent (9 out of 9) of the Western cities of over 100,000 population exceeded the national urban rate.³⁶ Furthermore, of all American cities with more than 100,000 persons for the years 1910-1914, San Francisco held the number one suicide position for all four years, and St. Louis, Kansas City, Oakland, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Denver alternately occupied the second to fifth positions. Bridgeport, Connecticut ranked fifth in 1910.³⁷

Examining the smaller urban areas, those with populations of more than 10,000 but less than 100,000 inhabitants, reveals the same regional tendencies but to a

less marked degree. Of these 585 municipalities 45 of the 278 (or 16 percent) of the Eastern cities exceeded the 16.7 national urban average for 1911-1920; 43 of the 210 Central cities (or 20 percent) surpassed the urban average; 17 of 51 Southern cities did so; and 52 percent, 24 out of 46, Western cities with between 10,000 and 100,000 inhabitants exceeded the national urban average.³⁸

Examining American cities in a slightly different manner, and for a time period which overlaps quite nicely with the 1907-1914 period of this study, gives results similar to those above. For this study the largest 100 American cities, 24 of which exceeded or equalled 250,000 population, have been organized into five regions and the urban averages of these regions compared. During the period of 1905-1909 the United States urban registration area suicide rate averaged 19.5 suicides per 100,000 population. At this same time the largest Eastern cities, which numbered 55, averaged 16.5; the Central cities, numbering 17, rated 21.8; the 16 Southern cities averaged 16.9; the three Rocky Mountain cities rated 26.8; and the 9 Pacific Coast cities averaged 33.7.³⁹

The pattern repeats itself for the years 1910-1914. During this period the national urban suicide rate averaged 20.3. In comparison, the Eastern cities averaged 16.4, the Central cities 24.1, the Southern cities 17.9, the Rocky Mountain cities 23.4, and the Pacific Coast cities averaged

a full 34.3 suicides per 100,000 population.⁴⁰

Thus, although the South switched positions in relationship to strictly urban suicide rates (in that the South's general suicide rate was lower than the East's but its urban rate was higher), the West maintained its general high suicide rate in both small and large urban areas. It should, however, be noted that in general, throughout the United States, suicides tended to be higher in a region's very large cities than in its smaller ones, with the lowest rates for cities of 10,000 to 100,000 population, and the highest rates for cities of more than 250,000 persons.⁴¹

Given the higher suicide rates for urban and Western regions one might expect Butte, Montana to exceed, or at least equal, the national registration area average of 16.34 suicides per 100,000 population for 1907-1914. It does. Montana did not become a census registration state until 1910. For 1910 and the following three years, reported Butte suicides per 100,000 population ranged from 30.5 to 67.8.⁴² Suicides for 1907, 1908, and 1909 can be estimated at low rates of 48.0, 29.0, and 57.0 respectively.⁴³ Averaging the annual rates gives Butte a 42.3 rate for the entire period, a rate more than two and one-half times that of the national registration area. Moreover, Butte's rate more than doubled the national urban average, and, in spite of its relatively small size (its citizens numbered 39,165 in 1910), Butte exceeded the average suicide rates of both the Rocky

Mountain and the Pacific Coast cities of greater than 100,000 inhabitants. Of the 100 largest American cities only San Francisco exceeded Butte in its suicide average for 1907-1914 (see Table A in the Appendix).⁴⁴ Clearly, more persons destroyed themselves in Butte than might be expected solely in light of the city's size and western location. Yet, these factors did contribute substantially to Butte's high suicide rate, as will be discussed later.

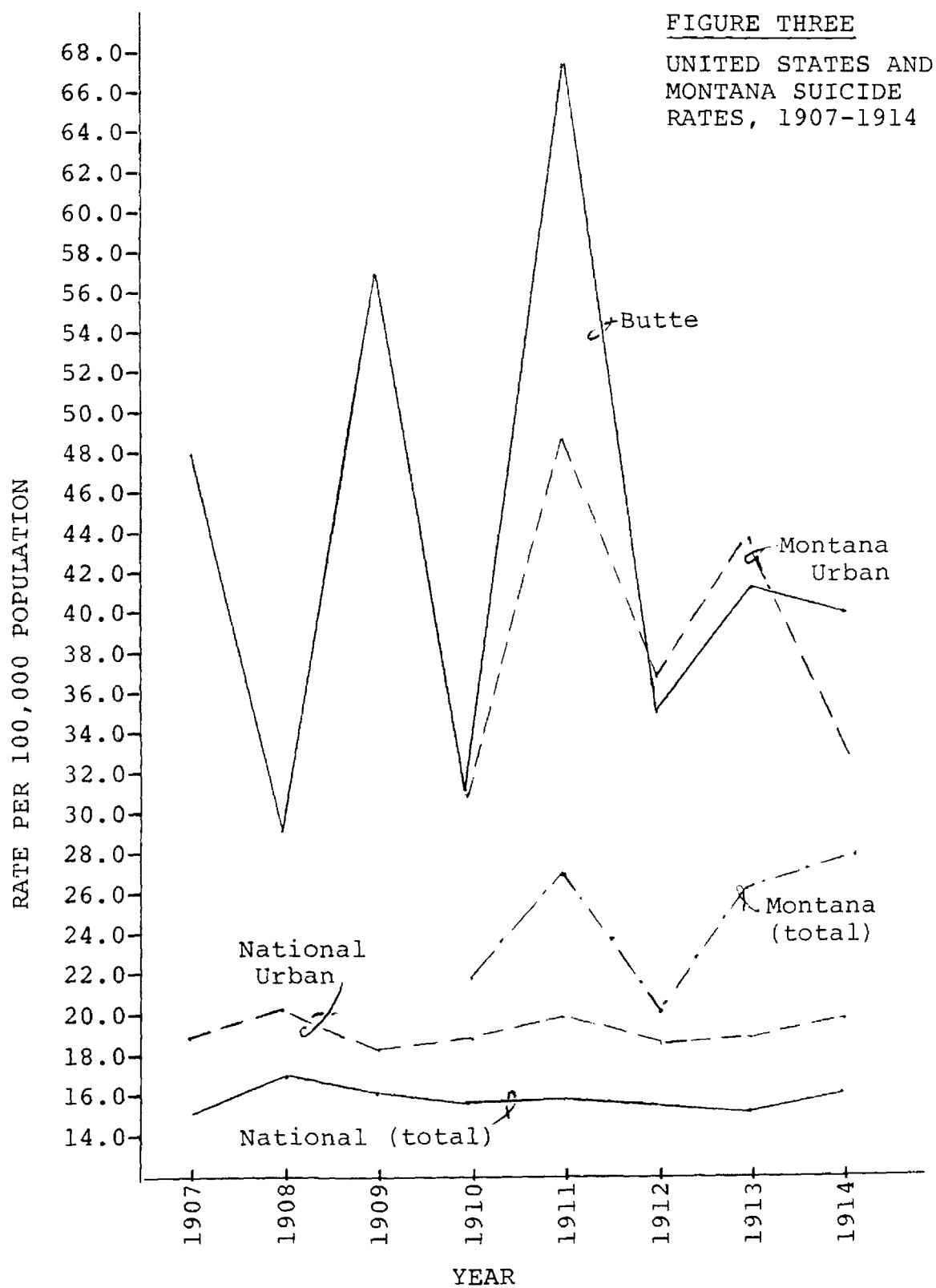
As previously indicated, the state of Montana possessed an abnormally high suicide rate. For the period of 1910-1914, the years of this study for which the Census Bureau collected information on Montana's deaths, Montana rural suicides averaged 20.5 compared to the national rural rate of 12.5. At the same time Montana's urban rate of 39.0 more than doubled the national urban rate of 18.9 suicides per 100,000 population.⁴⁵

Within Montana, Butte annually claimed the greatest number of urban suicides for 1910-1914. However, in terms of self-destruction rates per 100,000 population, Butte did not always rank highest of the six Montana census cities: Anaconda, Billings, Butte, Great Falls, Helena, and Missoula. In two of the five years, 1910 and 1913, Butte came in fourth place in suicides per 100,000 population; in 1912 Butte placed third; in 1914 Butte placed second; and in 1911 Butte ranked first. In terms of average suicide rates for the five-year period Great Falls slightly surpassed

Butte in self-immolations per 100,000 population with a rate of 43.5 versus Butte's 42.5.⁴⁶ Reliable suicide statistics for Great Falls for 1907, 1908, and 1909 might or might not show that Butte possessed higher overall rates for the entire eight-year period of 1907-1914. Either way, Butte did maintain a high suicide factor within a high suicide state, as well as within the entire national registration area. These relationships are represented graphically in figure 3 below.⁴⁷

As dire as they might seem, census statistics do not tell the entire story of self-destruction in Butte.⁴⁸ In a few instances, cases recorded as suicides in the Butte Mortuary Records did not receive representation in the Census Bureau's tabulations. Nor were mortuary records always complete in their designations of causes of death. For instance, mortuary records normally indicated whether a death due to external causes (gunshot wounds, poisons, knife wounds, etc.) resulted from an accident, a homicide, or a suicide, and occasionally noted a cause as being unknown. However, examining coroner inquest records and local newspapers for those deaths undifferentiated as to cause in the mortuary records added an additional six deaths to the suicide roll for the eight-year period.⁴⁹

The magnitude of possible error in the form of suicide underrepresentation in the mortuary records is more clearly suggested by the great number of persons whose deaths cannot



be absolutely determined as suicidal or accidental. A search of newspapers and coroner's inquest records yielded 33 such cases. In a few of these the mortuary records were incomplete, newspapers indefinite, and coroner's inquests nonexistent. One example of this is Non Ham whose death the mortuary records designated as caused by an "overdose of opium," The Butte Miner reported as being a self-administered overdose for unclear motives, and the city coroner decided did not require an inquest.⁵⁰

Another category of deaths whose causes cannot be strictly classified as suicide are those that the Butte Mortuary Records listed as accidental, the newspapers identified as self-immolations, and the coroner inquests either judged to be accidental or of indeterminate motive when the evidence may have suggested the opposite. Self-administered poisonings accounted for most of these deaths. An exceptional case was that of Alfred Mattock whose death the Butte Mortuary Records attributed to an accidental gunshot wound to the head and the Anaconda Standard reported as a clear case of suicide. A lengthy coroner's inquest revealed that Mattock suffered from a facial cancer, blindness in one eye and declining vision in the other, terrible headaches, and loss of appetite. His wife had initially stated that the instrument of death belonged to her and that she was unaware that Mattock knew its location. After she and several witnesses had

testified, and after the coroner prompted her, Mrs. Mattock suddenly recalled that her husband had requested that she bring him the oilcan on his death day so that he might clean the gun. The jury's verdict pronounced the cause of death being the accidental discharge of the gun while Mattock was cleaning it.⁵¹

The death of Mary Wilson demonstrates another category in which a death was inaccurately or incompletely recorded in mortuary records. On August 16, 1910 The Butte Intermountain ran an article stating that Mary Wilson, a twenty-eight-year-old black woman suffering from poor health whom police had arrested the month before on robbery charges, had committed suicide by drinking lye while in the county jail. The Butte Mortuary Records listed Mary Wilson as having died from chronic peritonitis. The same situation exists regarding Madeline Powell, an inmate of the red-light district, whom the Anaconda Standard reported dead from self-induced carbolic acid. The Butte Mortuary Records gave her cause of death as morphine poisoning and was not designated as self-administered even though Powell had left a suicide note.⁵² Random newspaper sampling located these two cases; quite likely others exist.

Suicide occurred more often in Butte, Montana during 1907-1914 than it did in the majority of contemporary American cities. If only one-half of the questionable deaths mentioned above were indeed suicides then the number

of Butte self-immolations for the period is raised from 155 to 171, and the number may indeed be higher. At its lowest rate one suicide, on the average, occurred every two and three-quarter weeks in Butte, a city of roughly 40,000 persons, during the eight-year time span. For anyone who considers the well-being of its members an indicator of the progress of civilization, such a high frequency of self-destruction indicates a story too important to be buried along with its victims.

PART TWO

Overview

In 1910 Butte, Montana, home of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company and birthplace of the Western Federation of Miners, possessed the largest population of any city in Montana. Established in 1867 with the designation of the Butte city townsite, the town already contained a population of 500 residents engaged in placer mining.⁵³ Twelve years later the town obtained incorporation as a city and by 1900 Butte, with over 30,000 residents, had easily surpassed, and doubled, the population of the state's then second largest city, Great Falls. During the next fourteen years Butte's population increased to 39,165 persons in 1910 and an estimated 42,286 persons in 1914. During the same period Great Falls slowly lost population until it numbered approximately 13,530 inhabitants, and Missoula and Billings roughly tripled their populations with 1914 estimates of 16,492 and 13,020 persons respectively. The remaining two census cities, Helena and Anaconda, maintained steady growth between 1900 and 1914 numbering, respectively, an estimated 13,258 and 10,424 persons at the close of the period.⁵⁴

Besides being numerous, Butte's population was quite diverse. Over twenty-four foreign nationalities were

represented in Butte in 1910. Less than one-third of Butte citizens were native whites of native parentage. Black persons accounted for less than one percent of the population: of these, approximately one-third, or seventy-three persons, were reported as mulattos. Although American Indians resided in Butte in greater numbers in earlier years, in 1910 only one Indian was enumerated by the Census Bureau. Native born whites of mixed or foreign parentage comprised slightly over one-third of the city's population, and foreign born whites accounted for the remaining third.⁵⁵ Thus, of Butte's 1910 population of 39,165 persons, only one-third were American born with American parents, and fully two-thirds were immigrants or the children of at least one immigrant. Of the immigrants and their children the Irish predominated, followed by the English, Canadians, Germans, and Finns, roughly in that order.⁵⁶

Males outnumbered females in the copper industry-based Butte by a ratio of 132 males to every 100 females.⁵⁷ The majority of Butte women were married and the majority of Butte men single. In spite of being fewer in number Butte women made up almost three-quarters of the widowed population,⁵⁸ an unsurprising fact in view of the daily health hazards posed by the mines and smelters that employed the majority of Butte men.⁵⁹

Before examining in detail the suicides of this central

Montana city whose early twentieth-century history was punctuated by colorful characters, political shenanigans, labor strife, devastating mine disasters, and tales of a red-light district that some claimed rivaled that of the Barbary Coast of San Francisco,⁶⁰ it will be useful to provide the reader with a general overview of the situation. In the brief discussions of Butte suicides that follow, and in later discussions unless otherwise indicated, only those deaths whose causes have been determined without a shadow of a doubt to have been suicides have been included in the computations.

One distinguishing feature of Butte suicides⁶¹ is the predominance of male mortalities. An excess of three times more men than women killed themselves in Butte during 1907-1914. Moreover, men tended to take their own lives at more advanced ages than did women, with the peak ten-year suicidal age bracket being the forties for men and the twenties for women. Although married and unmarried persons on the whole committed suicide in approximately equal numbers, married women killed themselves more frequently than did single women and in greater proportion than married men.

In terms of birthplace, over one-third of both male and female suicides were native Americans. The greatest number of foreign born suicides occurred among the Irish, German, English, and Finnish, not necessarily in proportion to their

countrymen's representations in the total Butte population.

A statistical survey of internment locations--the only consistent source of possible religious affiliations available for this study--reveals no general preponderance of one Christian denomination, Catholic or Protestant (or other), in the total number of suicides, although Protestant suicides may have been slightly more frequent. Comparisons between male and female suicides, however, show a distinct correlation between reported instances of female self-destruction and Protestant burial choices. Approximately three times as many female suicide victims were interred in the Mount Moriah (Protestant) Cemetery as in the two Catholic cemeteries.

What mortuary records, coroner's inquests, and local newspapers do state clearly are the ways in which people destroyed themselves. Approximately one-half of the suicides chose chemical or drug-induced poisonings as their route of earthly exist, and for women poisoning was the instrument of self-induced death. Most of the Butte female suicides died of the effects of carbolic acid. A majority of male suicides, in equal numbers, chose either guns or chemical poisonings as their instruments of death. Other methods of suicides will be discussed later.

The great majority of Butte suicides committed the act in their own homes. And the homes of the Butte suicides, over 90 percent of them, were located both within the city

limits and in the northern one-half of the city. Almost all of these locations were confined to a limited area that encompassed the central downtown section of the city, with businesses, boarding houses, and private dwellings interspersed. Contemporaries considered much of the area congested, unsanitary, and disease ridden.

As already demonstrated in figure 3, although suicide in Butte throughout the eight-year period occurred with great frequency in comparison to national rates, it did not remain consistent from year to year. The greatest number of suicides occurred in 1911, the fewest in 1908. The suicide rate fluctuated in an up and down cycle from 1907 through 1914.

In summary, in its most general aspects suicide in Butte was cyclical, predominately male, and encompassed more foreign than native born, roughly equal numbers of married and unmarried, Protestant and Catholic, persons. The remainder of this paper will be devoted to dividing the already mentioned categories into much finer ones, and discussing them and their interrelationships as well as how they compare to corresponding suicide factors in a national and international context; examining the possible motives of Butte suicides based on their living conditions, coroner's inquest records, and newspaper reports; and summing up the conclusions reached with the various phases of the examination in light of past and present findings in the

broad field of suicidology.⁶²

Suicide as a Cause of Death

In terms of suicide rates per 100,000 population, Butte's rate, as previously discussed, ranked extremely high in comparison with national averages. Comparing Butte suicide in relation to deaths by all causes to the same phenomenon in the national registration area gives similar results. Suicide as a cause of death was somewhat more important in Butte than it was in the United States registration area as a whole. For example, in 1910 the Census Bureau classified all deaths into one of thirty-three categories by cause of death. Of these categories suicide ranked seventeenth⁶³ in terms of deaths per 100,000 population for the entire registration area, and fourteenth⁶⁴ for the national urban registration area. During the same year suicide in Butte ranked eleventh in principal causes of death.⁶⁵

It might be noted also that the top two causes of death in Butte--tuberculosis of the lungs and violent deaths excluding suicide, both of which will prove important to this study--far exceeded the United States registration area and urban area rates for these deaths. Tuberculosis of the lungs in Butte surpassed the national rate by more than one and one-half times, and the national urban rate by over one

and one-third times. Violent deaths in Butte, excluding suicide, exceeded national urban rates by approximately one and one-half times. In 1910 roughly only seven times more people in Butte died of the city's leading mortality cause, tuberculosis of the lungs, and less than four and one-half times more persons expired from the second most prevalent form of death, nonsuicidal violence, than did those who committed suicide.⁶⁶ Results similar to all those above can be found for 1914, the last year of the survey.⁶⁷ As a principal cause of death suicide ranked respectfully high in Butte, Montana.

Sex

Of the 155 suicides in Butte from 1907 through 1914 men accounted for 119 of the deaths and women for 36. In actual numbers of deaths over three times as many men killed themselves as did women. Given the 1910 Butte demographics of 132 males to every 100 females one might expect Butte men to have higher death rates for almost all causes. However, even allowing for an exaggerated male to female ratio of 2:1, Butte men still committed suicide in proportionately greater numbers than did Butte women.⁶⁸

The predominance of male suicide did not confine itself to Butte. Generally, where statistics are available, men took their own lives in significantly greater numbers than did women throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries. Numerous studies in suicidology confirm this tendency, giving the normal ratio of male to female suicides as approximately three to one.⁶⁹ Thus as far as actual numbers of male to female self-immolations are concerned, Butte suicides displayed no unusual pattern.

Considering the aforementioned proportions of male and female residents in Butte it is logical to look beyond the actual numbers of suicides and examine the sex ratios in terms of crude rates (rates per 100,000 population). For the eight-year period, Butte females (who numbered 16,851 in 1910⁷⁰) mortally destroyed themselves at an approximate rate of 26.7, Butte men at an approximate 66.6 rate. Thus, in terms of their respective numbers in the total population, Butte males and females committed suicide in a 2.5:1 ratio, a smaller ratio than the norm.

One contemporary study of American self-destruction during 1910-1925 concluded that the higher rates in the West resulted not, in terms of sex differentials, from an excess of males in the population but rather from the fact that Western men simply killed themselves more frequently than did Eastern men.⁷¹ An in-depth comparison of male versus female suicides in the West is beyond the scope of this study. However, because the Butte rates were generally high, it seems probable that the 2.5:1 male to female suicide rate resulted from female suicides being comparatively higher than male suicides in terms of

contemporary norms. A comparison of Butte suicide rates with national male and female rates supports this conclusion.⁷²

Various explanations for generally lower female suicide rates offered by suicidology are supported, or at least not refuted, by factors of the Butte suicides. One explanation involves suicide methods. Women tended to use less lethal methods, especially poisons, than did men.⁷³ This was true of Butte during the period of 1907-1914; women chose poison almost exclusively, while men chose firearms as often as they did poison. It should be noted, however, that carbolic acid, the most frequently taken chemical, certainly offered a no "prettier" or less painful death than did the other means used by the suicide victims. And, taken in sufficient quantity, carbolic acid proved as effective in inducing death as did any other method.

Related to the theory that women choose methods less likely to prove fatal are the ideas that women attempt suicide as frequently as do men although their failures at self-destruction are much higher, and that women's suicides are much more likely to be "cries for help" or "feigned" suicides than are men's.⁷⁴ Unfortunately not enough information is available on Butte suicides and attempted suicides to conclusively support or deny these theories. However, newspaper research indicates that a tallying of attempted or "feigned" suicides with successful female

self-immolations would still leave men at the forefront of Butte suicide, and that "cries for help" were just as likely to be a factor in male suicides or suicide attempts as they were in women's.

In general, the male to female suicide ratio of Butte displayed no extraordinary qualities. Other factors that affected the rates, and explanations, will be brought out later in the study.

Marital Status

Approximately equal numbers of married and unmarried persons killed themselves in Butte during the period of this study. Single persons did commit suicide at slightly higher percentages, however, with 44.5 percent of the suicide victims being single and 41.3 percent married. Far fewer divorced and widowed persons killed themselves. Only 4.2 percent of the suicides were divorced and 1.9 widowed. The marital status of the remaining 9 percent is unknown.

Historically, single persons in the United States tended to kill themselves more frequently than did the married, with the widowed exceeding the rates for single persons and the divorced possessing the highest rates of all four groups.⁷⁵ Comparing marital status to Butte population demographics reveals that married persons, who made up 37.8 percent of the population in 1910,⁷⁶ committed suicide at an approximate crude rate of 53.91; single persons (of age 15

or over), 32.8 percent of the population, at an approximate rate of 67.07; the widowed, 4.5 percent of the population, at an approximate 21.35; and the divorced, 0.7 percent of the population, committed suicide at an approximate rate of 233.20 per 100,000 Butte divorced persons.

The astronomically high self-immolation rate for divorced persons may or may not be a true indication of Butte's divorced persons' propensity toward self-destruction--the number of persons divorced in the city was small and the number of divorced suicide victims in this study, five, too few for a necessarily accurate representation. The possibility of misleading rates should be kept in mind also when considering the statistics for widowed persons.

Viewing the rates for widowed and divorced persons with due skepticism, it appears that Butte suicides followed predictable patterns; suicides were more frequent among the single than the married, although not to a great degree. In actual numbers only five more single persons killed themselves than did married, and the divorced held by far the highest rate--over four times that of married persons. (Rates for divorced persons have been identified in the United States as being two, three, or four times greater than married persons' rates, so the Butte rate may indeed be accurate.⁷⁷) Only the rate for widowed persons was exceptional; instead of having one of the highest rates they

had the lowest. This may be explained by the fact that, as previously mentioned, women were the minority sex in Butte yet they comprised almost three-quarters of the widowed. Butte widows may have found it easier to remarry and form other attachments than did widowed men, thus keeping down the total suicide rate for the group. No widowed women committed suicide during the eight-year period examined, while 2.5 percent of the men who killed themselves were widowers.

Divorced women, too, displayed a lower frequency of self-destruction than their numbers in the total Butte population might suggest. Although divorced men and women fairly equalled each other numerically in Butte, only one of the five divorced suicide victims belonged to the female sex. The social factor mentioned for the widowed may have prevailed for the divorced also. In terms of suicide percentages for their respective sexes, females ranked only slightly behind men, 2.8 percent of all female suicides being divorced compared to 3.4 percent of all male suicides.

Comparing married to single suicide males and females yields results more statistically reliable than those for the divorced or widowed. Twenty-one of the thirty-six female suicide victims were married and thirteen were single. They equalled 58.3 and 36.1 percent, respectively, of all female suicides. For men single suicides predominated. Of the 119 male suicides, the married

numbered forty-three and the single fifty-six: percentages of 36.1 and 47.1, respectively. The percentage of female suicides who were single equalled that of male suicides who were married. Clearly marriage protected men from suicide to a much greater extent than it did women.⁷⁸

Marriage's protective effect has been explained as a result of the regulatory force it exerts. Marriage provides a person with at least one "significant other" for whom one must continually consider the effects of one's actions, including the act of suicide.⁷⁹ This function, of course, varies with the circumstances of each particular marriage. In some cases, such as those of Bert Smith and Philip O'Connell, the consideration of one's acts upon one's mate becomes perverted. Smith and O'Connell both murdered their wives before committing suicide.⁸⁰ William Powers attempted to kill his wife; and two other Butte men, Lewis Addison and Henrich Schneider, attempted to take their possibly unloving, nonmarital mates with them--one unsuccessfully and the other successfully.⁸¹

Marriage also, in most cases, provided one with a partner to share both the major problems and triumphs of life; to work with in the pursuit of economic, social, and other progress; to help shield one from adversity; and to share one's affections with. Unfortunately, these factors tend to protect men more than women, with women being more likely to commit suicide over marital problems than men,⁸²

although in Butte marital and romantic relationships were not the primary cause of suicide for either males or females. It should be kept in mind also that during the period of this study married women far exceeded single women in Butte, being almost twice as numerous, and therefore could be expected to commit suicide in much greater numbers. Population demographics alone might account for much of the distribution in marital status for Butte's female suicides.

Children, and the size of the family as a whole, have also been identified as influential in decreasing suicide, with the larger family offering more protection than the smaller.⁸³ To the degree of identification of family size supplied by newspapers, coroner's inquest records, and census research, this aspect of the Butte suicides will be considered in the section dealing with external living conditions. Butte Mortuary Records did not identify the presence of children or other family members in the suicide's home. As will be seen in the following section, the degree of protection from suicide offered by marriage varied with the age as well as with the sex of an individual.

Age

Butte suicides from 1907 through 1914 encompassed a wide distribution of ages. The majority of women killed themselves between the ages of twenty and thirty-four, with the lower portion of the age bracket accounting for more suicides than the upper portion. The years twenty-five through fifty-four all claimed a large toll on Butte men in terms of numbers of suicides. The numerical distribution of ages for both men and women is shown in table 2.⁸⁴

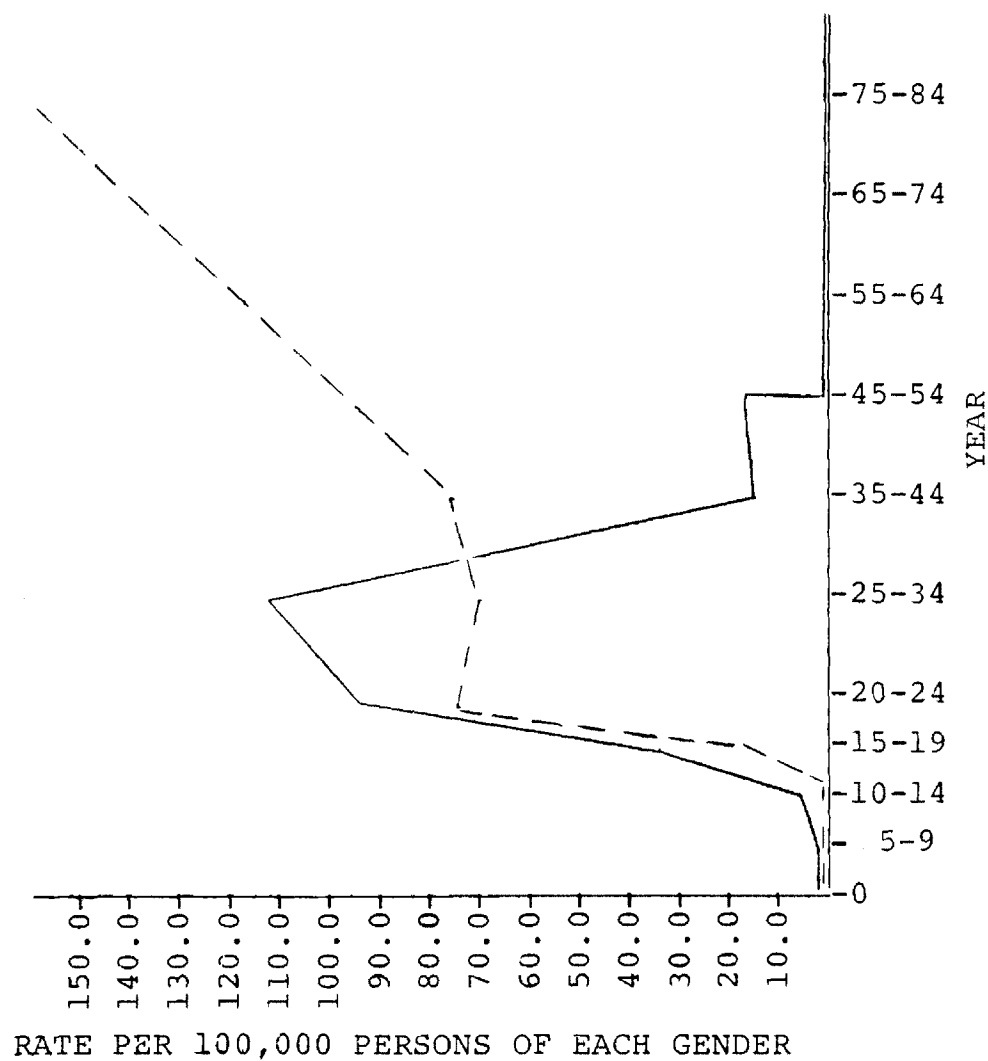
However, to accurately determine which age groups rendered Butte residents most susceptible to suicide, the city's population demographics must be examined. Doing so yields the data graphed in figure 4. As indicated, female suicides started at low rates, increased to 112.2 suicides per 100,000 females during the ages of twenty-five to thirty-four, declined rapidly before reaching a plateau in the high teens during the ages of forty-five to fifty-four, and then dropped to a rate of zero for the remaining years. Male suicides started low as did the females, increased to a rate of 18.9 during the ages of twenty to twenty-four, and remained relatively stable--except for a slight increase after the mid-thirties--until the mid-forties after which the suicide rate in terms of mortalities per 100,000 males skyrocketed. Thus, females ranked higher in suicidal frequencies than did males until after the mid-thirties when

Table 2

Number of Female and Male Suicides by Age

| <u>Age</u> | <u># Females</u> | <u># Males</u> | <u>Total No.</u> |
|------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 10-14 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 15-19 | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| 20-24 | 15 | 13 | 28 |
| 25-34 | 10 | 34 | 44 |
| 35-44 | 3 | 28 | 31 |
| 45-64 | 3 | 32 | 35 |
| over 65 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| unknown | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| Totals | <u>36</u> | <u>119</u> | <u>155</u> |

FIGURE FOUR
BUTTE SUICIDE RATES
BY GENDER AND AGE,
1907-1914



males outpaced them. Males surpassed the suicidal 112.2 female peak after the age bracket of the mid-fifties, and surpassed the rate of approximately 150 after the age of sixty-five.

A comparison of the above results with those of Frederick Hoffman, a contemporary statistician for Prudential Life Insurance Company, for a study of the years 1910-1914 of the entire United States registration area⁸⁵ produces some startling results. Although Butte women approached the national norm in suicides per 100,000 women after the age bracket of the mid-thirties, they exceeded the national female suicide rate for ages fifteen to nineteen by over sixty times,⁸⁶ and the national rate for ages twenty to thirty-four by approximately ten times. Butte men consistently exceeded national suicide rates for males for all age brackets, although not by as large proportions as Butte women exceeded national averages. For ages fifteen to nineteen Butte men exceeded national averages thirty times over;⁸⁷ for ages twenty to twenty-four they quadrupled the national rate; and after the mid-twenties they exceeded national rates by approximately two to two and three-quarter times.

Hoffman arrived at a 24.1 average suicide rate for men and an average 7.7 percent for women.⁸⁸ This supports the earlier contention that Butte women took their own lives in proportionately greater numbers than did Butte men in

comparison with national norms, the average rate for Butte women being 26.7 and that of Butte men 66.6.

The linear suicide rate for Butte men and the curvilinear one for Butte women demonstrate that women younger than thirty-five and men over the age of forty-five experienced the greatest propensity toward self-destruction. Although the marital status of the Butte suicides as a whole was discussed in the previous section, it seems advisable to more closely examine marital status for those two groups which were at greatest risk. Such examination reveals that between the ages of forty-five and sixty-four marital status played a negligible role in male suicides in terms of numbers of suicides. After age sixty-four, Butte men who committed suicide were either single or widowed.⁸⁹ In terms of their respective representation in the Butte population, the suicidal rate for divorced men over forty-four was over five times that of married men of the same age bracket, and approximately two and three-quarters times that of single men aged forty-four or older. Widowed men over the age of forty-four ranked lowest. Combining the single, widowed, and divorced men into a broad category of unmarried men⁹⁰ and comparing that category with single men reveals that unmarried men, who averaged 153.06 suicides per 100,000 after age forty-four, exceeded the 95.9 rate of married men over one and one-half times. At older ages Butte men experienced more problems

involving social isolation, employment and health;⁹¹ those without the support offered by marriage, both direct and indirect, were much more likely to end their own lives than were their married counterparts. Marriage helped protect men of all ages from suicide, but its role was especially crucial with advanced ages.

Married and unmarried women below the age of thirty-five committed suicide in approximately equal numbers with the number of married suicides slightly exceeding unmarried ones. Omitting Butte's youngest suicide victim, Della Gertrude Moyle, who at age thirteen could not be expected to have been married, and calculating suicide rates only for those females aged eighteen and over (two Butte suicides died at age eighteen, Della's sister Ida May Moyle, and Nettie Collette, a supposedly beautiful girl who drank carbolic acid for unclear motives which may have involved a man⁹²), gives unsurprising results. Approximately two and one-quarter times as many females between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four were unmarried in Butte as were married. Thus, although the number of female married and unmarried suicide victims varied by only one person, the suicide rate for married females, 118.70, exceeded that of unmarried females by two and one-half times. In the age bracket of twenty-four to forty-four⁹³ married women surpassed unmarried (single or divorced for this classification) by over four times in the general Butte

population, and suicide rates shifted, with nonmarried women rating 30.61 versus a 20.71 rate for married women. Marriage seems to have exerted a detrimental effect on younger women, and a fairly positive one on women past their mid-twenties. The higher rates of suicide among very young married women may be partly explained by the abrupt changes women often encountered when leaving their family home, increased health problems connected with childbearing, difficulties in adjusting their lives to that of a mate, and the unhappy possibility of the marriage being a mismatch. With age, marital problems tend to be resolved in one manner or another, lowering the propensity toward self-destruction. The family, too, usually grew after the first years of marriage, decreasing the suicidal rate for women.⁹⁴ Men married at more advanced ages in Butte than did women and therefore had greater opportunities to explore and, perhaps, to adjust to, adult life before they entered marriage.

Immigration and Emigration

Otto Becker had tried several vocations and travelled many miles, from New York to Denver, from Denver to Spokane, before he arrived in Butte for his second visit in August 1914. Depressed over his inability to secure work as an actor and his loss of money at the Anaconda racetrack, Otto Becker decided to cancel his plans to go on to Reno, Nevada.

With his manuscript for a play (set in a cigar factory--he had recently worked in one) beside him, Otto Becker sat on the shore of Lake Avoca (which was actually more of a pond than a lake)--just south of Butte--and wrote his "last message to the world to which you are born not to die but to suffer" on the back of a vaudeville act. His farewell message he wrote from heart, a poem by Robert Service:

There is a race of men that don't fit in,
 A race that cann't stay still,
 So they break the hearts of their ken
 And they roam the world at will.
 They roam the field and they ride the flood,
 And they climb the mountain crest;
 There's the curse of the Gypsy blood,
 And they don't know how to rest. . . .

They said, "Could I find my proper groove
 What a deep mold I would make;"
 So they chop and change and each fresh move
 Is only a fresh mistake.

And each forgets as he slips and drowns,
 After a brilliant fitful pace,
 It's the steady, quiet prodding ones
 Who win the lifelong race.
 And each forgets that his youth has fled,
 Forgets his prime is past . . .

He has failed, he has failed, he has missed his chance;
 Life has been a jolly good joke on him
 And now is the time to laugh.
 . . . he is one of the legion lost
 He never meant to win;
 . . . He's a man who cann't fit in.

Otto Becker could not fit in, neither by his own standards nor by those he felt society had demanded. After recording the poem he drank five ounces of carbolic acid, stood up, waved and yelled "good-bye" to two nearby women, walked into

the lake, and drowned himself in four feet of water after waving farewell one last time.⁹⁵ Otto Becker had come to Butte and the West in search of a better life, but Butte and the West had failed to provide him with anything other than disappointment.

Otto Becker had not journeyed alone to the West. The Golden Land of Opportunity, the Second Garden of Eden, the place to grow up with the nation; the West seemed to offer a cornucopia of abundance and opportunity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and to offer it to everyone. Promoters for the land and its supposedly boundless riches extolled the virtues of the American West across the country and throughout the world. People were encouraged and enticed to come to the West. And come they did, with dreams old and new, some with fantasies of future fortune, some with desperate hopes that their last chance in life might turn out right.

Butte received its fair share, or more, of these national and international questers. As already mentioned, more than twenty-four nationalities were represented in the mining town, many lured there by tales of high wages--wages that may have been high in comparison with those elsewhere, but which unfortunately often fell short of the amount of money needed to edge off poverty in this growing Western city.⁹⁶ In 1910 a maximum one-third of Butte's population could claim America as their place of birth, and far fewer

could name Butte, or even Montana, as their location of origin. For too many of these native and nonnative people Butte in the end offered a life over which they preferred--or felt compelled to hasten to themselves--death.

Those persons who brought about their own deaths, in the direct form of suicide, varied almost as greatly in their origins as did Butte citizens as a whole. At first glance it might seem that foreign born and American born persons in Butte experienced an equal propensity toward self-destruction in 1907-1914. Of suicides whose birthplaces are known, 47.2 percent were native born Americans and the remainder immigrants. However, comparing the ratio of immigrant suicides to the number of immigrants in the Butte population gives a much higher suicide rate for immigrants than for nonimmigrants. Immigrants in Butte killed themselves at a rate of 63.57, one almost two and one-quarter times that of the American born 28.6 rate.

An examination of the Butte suicides' nativity by gender, like that for their ages and marital status, shows two distinct gender patterns. Suicide rates for immigrant women were slightly lower than those for native born females in terms of their respective representations in the Butte population. The suicide rate for immigrant men, however, at 91.77, exceeded the nonimmigrant male rate of 34.24 by almost two and three-quarters times. The above rates

include only those persons for whom contemporary sources recorded place of birth. It is quite likely that the above rates would all increase could the nativity of the remaining 18.6 percent (29 persons) of the remaining suicides be added into the computations. Detailed figures on the genders of native born persons in Butte are not available for comparison with the city's suicides. It should be noted, however, that in addition to the 47.2 percent nonnative portion of the suicide population another 30 percent were born of at least one immigrant parent. A full 20 percent of these suicide victims were born of two immigrants. Thus, approximately 77 percent of the Butte suicides were either immigrants, or the children of immigrants, as opposed to the approximate 67 percent of the general Butte population. The propensity toward self-destruction in Butte greatly increased with immigrant status, and also increased somewhat for those native persons with immigrant parents.

Due to the extremely small samples acquired when grouping the suicides by nativity (for those whose nativities have been identified), no absolutely reliable analysis of suicide rates in respect to nation of origin can be conducted. Some general observations, however, can be made. Immigrants from Italy, Ireland, Norway, China, France, Canada, Austria, Finland, Germany, England, Scotland, and Sweden committed self-annihilation in Butte during the period 1907 through 1914. Of these, immigrants

from Finland, Ireland, Germany, and Canada accounted for the greatest number of suicides, roughly in that order. All four of these ethnic groups ranked comparatively high in population in the city. In terms of Butte demographics alone, however, one might expect Irish immigrants, who numbered 3,196 in 1910, to account for the greatest number of self-immolations, followed at some distance by the English (with a Butte population of 2,181), the Canadian (population 2,020), the Finnish (population 1,013), the Austrian (population 955), and the German (population 858) immigrants.

Greater ease and assimilation into Butte culture and society probably explains to a great extent the relatively low rate of Irish and English suicide. In addition to this it might be recalled that Ireland possessed practically the lowest rate of self-destruction in the world. In immigrating to the United States attitudes toward death, and methods of meeting it, would not be quickly abandoned.⁹⁷ (In the same manner, Germans, who ranked high in terms of numbers of Butte suicides, possessed high rates in both their native land and in America as a whole.⁹⁸) The Irish, along with non-French Canadians and Newfoundlanders, maintained a unique attribute of females outnumbering males in their immigrants to America.⁹⁹ The Irish, although they did not fully maintain this distinction in Butte, did possess the lowest male to female sex ratio of any immigrant

group in the city.¹⁰⁰ Their distinctive sex distribution may have influenced their suicide rate, in that males, who generally claimed much higher suicide rates than females, were proportionately fewer, in addition to the obvious marital and other sexually oriented advantages. The English immigrants may also have shared these beneficial factors as their male to female ratio was only slightly unequal in America,¹⁰¹ and their cultural differences with native Americans were less than those of other immigrant groups--thus facilitating cross-cultural alliances.

A higher general suicidal rate for immigrants in Butte and elsewhere is not a surprising phenomenon. The very process of being uprooted and transplanted into another culture and physical environment implies a certain amount of mental, emotional, and psychic dislocation--even when one voluntarily does the uprooting and transplanting of oneself.¹⁰² Although an immigrant might come with hopes and expectations, consternations and regrets probably travelled not far behind. Yet these fears and aspirations, as well as mental and physical upheaval, would not have been confined to the immigrant. The emigrant too would have experienced them.

Although slightly over 50 percent of the suicides in Butte during the period of this study were indigenous to America, extremely few of them were indigenous to Butte or to any other place in Montana. (Due to the age of the state

this is to be expected.) Seven of the suicides, four females and three males, were born in Butte; three others were born elsewhere in the state. The remaining 146 persons came from elsewhere in the nation. And they came from all over the nation. Many of them appear to have moved, like Otto Becker, several times in their lives, usually going further West with each new move. In some cases a person either moved out of Butte briefly and then returned, or else had just recently moved away from Butte and then killed themselves--as though they saw no point in trying to establish a life elsewhere. This seemed to be the case with Leah Oppenheimer who, suffering from poor health, went to stay with her married sister in New York and several months later killed herself by gunshot; and Ana Ossenbrug who destroyed herself by leaping from a window in Los Angeles--less than six months after her twenty-eight-year-old son committed suicide in Butte.¹⁰³ Both of these women managed to move away from Butte, but not before the city had taken from them something too precious to live without.

In very few cases was the emigration out of Butte; the vast majority of times the movement was into the city. These suicide victims may have stayed in Butte a few days, a few months, or several years, but they came from elsewhere. Their personal reasons for coming may have predisposed these people to suicide,¹⁰⁴ but whatever they came for, they did not find it.

Religion

The only consistent source available for a study of possible religious affiliations of the Butte suicide victims is the Butte Mortuary Records' identification of burial location. A statistical survey of the internment locations reveals no general preponderance of one Christian sect, Catholic or Protestant, in the total number of suicides, although Protestant deaths appear to be somewhat higher. Although no exact figures for religious affiliation for the Butte community as a whole are available, church memberships when given in Butte city directories,¹⁰⁵ as well as the previously mentioned ethnic distribution of the city, indicate a vast majority of Catholic worshippers in Butte. This being true, an equal number of Protestant and Catholic burials would indicate a much higher suicidal frequency for the former denomination.

In the case of women this tendency is heightened. Female burial choices show a distinct correlation between reported instances of self-destruction in women and Protestant internment locations. Only five of the thirty-six female suicides were buried in either of the two Catholic cemeteries. Considering the preponderance of Catholics in Butte, suicide occurred with much greater frequency among Protestant than among non-Protestant women. Only one female suicide received burial in Butte's Jewish cemetery. No male suicides were so interred.

The above factors strongly indicate that suicide in Butte, Montana during 1907 through 1914 occurred at higher rates for Protestants than for Catholics. This is not surprising in that, as indicated in Part One, those nations in which Catholics comprised the major groups of worshippers (in Ireland, Italy, Spain, and Portugal primarily) suicide rates fell lower than those of other countries. This has been attributed partly to the differences in church doctrine between Catholics and Protestants, although those individuals considering suicide are influenced by factors other than religious doctrine.¹⁰⁶ It must be further remembered that with the limited sources on religious affiliation available for this study, neither the degree of influence of the church on the suicides nor the amount of religious practice observed by those who killed themselves can be ascertained. The possibility also exists that the reporting of suicides varied between the denominations, causing an overrepresentation of one over another.

Occupation

Forty-eight job classifications comprised the vocations formerly followed by the 155 Butte suicides. In addition to these categories the Butte Mortuary Records listed five persons as either "at home" or at school. Of those 143 persons whose occupations newspapers, coroner's inquests, or mortuary records identified, forty-six persons or 32.17

percent worked as miners. Another four persons were employed in the mines as machinists or teamsters, bringing the mine workers to a 35 percent portion for those whose occupations are known. Due to the vagueness of records on certain people concerning their vocations, the total number of mine workers may exceed fifty persons. In 1910 roughly 12,000 men found employment in the Butte copper mines.¹⁰⁷ Comparing the number of mine worker suicides with the total number of mine workers in Butte gives them a rate in excess of fifty suicides per 100,000 miners, one slightly higher than the general Butte average of 42.3 for 1907-1914.

In terms of numbers of suicides the occupational groups with the greatest suicide risk included, besides miners, housewives (with seventeen suicidal deaths), general laborers (with ten deaths), prostitutes (five or more deaths), domestics and carpenters (four deaths each), and bookkeepers (with three suicidal mortalities). The remaining forty-one occupational categories accounted for either one or two suicides each. What appears notable about the suicides' vocations, in respect to vocation alone, is that over 95 percent of them are those that might be considered as working class or lower middle class (small tradesmen, and semiskilled or skilled workers, usually without real property). Wealth was not a common attribute of the Butte suicides. Those employed at nonworking class or the "professional" occupations all seemed to have

suffered financial or other setbacks in their careers. One example of this is Charles Cockrell, a once prominent stockbroker whose business failed two years previous to Cockrell's death by carbolic acid.¹⁰⁸

In general, suicide cut across occupational groups in Butte, with the deepest gashes being made in the lower status vocational sector. Miners, with their particular occupational hazards, committed suicide at slightly higher rates than the remainder of the Butte population.¹⁰⁹ This is true also of housewives who, as indicated in a previous section, appeared to be at higher risk simply because of their marriages. The occupations of most of the remaining suicides brought them in daily contact with the miners with whom they lived side by side. It does not seem that vocation alone comprised a major suicidal risk in Butte,¹¹⁰ although the fruits of the suicides' labors apparently did--as will be discussed later.

Methods

Butte Mortuary Records, coroner's inquest transcripts, and local newspapers clearly identified the methods people chose to destroy themselves with during 1907-1914. Of the 155 persons 49.7 percent died through internal methods (ingesting various drugs or poisons), 49.0 percent died through external methods (shootings, lacerations, hangings, etc.), and 1.3 percent (two persons) used unknown means to

end their lives.

Those persons who chose chemical or drug induced poisonings as their route of earthly exist utilized at least nine different substances. The internal suicide methods included the taking of chloral hydrate, chloroform, morphine, and potassium cyanide--which combined accounted for 3.23 percent of all suicides; ingesting laudanum, bichloride of mercury, and strychnine (7.09 percent combined); and, above all, the drinking of carbolic acid. At least fifty-two persons, 33.54 percent, of the designated 155 persons died from the effects of carbolic acid. The actual number of all suicides by method and for each sex is shown in table 3. Eight persons, 5.16 percent of the suicides, used unidentified poisons as instruments of death.

In the early years of the twentieth century a person could easily purchase a bottle of carbolic acid at the neighborhood drugstore. It only required a couple of ingested ounces of this caustic poison, normally used for disinfectant purposes, to fatally wound the human body. Persons who swallowed carbolic acid suffered an agonizing death. The poison caused instantaneous torment, destroyed internal organs, and when splashed burned or stripped off the flesh. Some authorities advocated control of poisons like carbolic acid (as well as gun control) due to what they considered negligence on the part of retailers who sold such

Table 3
Methods of Suicide by Gender,
Butte, 1907-1914

| | <u>Method</u> | <u>Male</u> | <u>Female</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| E X T E R N A L | Gunshot | 42 | 4 | 46 |
| | Laceration | 15 | 0 | 15 |
| | Hanging | 9 | 0 | 9 |
| | Jumping from high places | -- | -- | -- |
| | Decapitation (by train) | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | Drowning | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | Burning | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | | | | |
| I N T E R N A L | Carbolic acid | 34 | 18 | 52 |
| | Laudanum | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| | Strychnine | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| | Morphine | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| | Bichloride of mercury | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | Chloral hydrate | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | Chloroform | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | Potassium cynide | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | Undefined poison | 3 | 5 | 8 |
| | | | | |
| | Unspecified | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| | Totals | 119 | 36 | 155 |
| | External methods | 70 | 6 | 76 |
| | Internal methods | 47 | 30 | 77 |

substances to anyone who wished to buy them, often with a knowledge of the purchaser's intentions.¹¹¹ Antidotes, including mixtures of water and mustard (sometimes with grease) plus ammonia and whiskey, were administered to a person discovered dying from carbolic acid.¹¹²

Availability doubtlessly constituted a crucial factor in the widespread choice of drug and chemical poisoning, especially the brutal carbolic acid, as suicide methods. Strychnine, used in small doses as a tonic and a heart stimulant; bichloride of mercury (also known as mercuric chloride, bichloride, or corrosive sublimate), sold in tablet form and used like carbolic acid as an antiseptic¹¹³; chloroform, a liquid used as a solvent or a general anesthetic; and laudanum, an opium preparation, proved only slightly more difficult to obtain than carbolic acid. A significant percentage of all suicides died as a result of poisonings; for women, poisoning was the instrument of self-induced death. Thirty of the thirty-six female suicides, a full 83.3 percent (almost twice the national average for women¹¹⁴), ended their lives with poison. Of these, 60 percent used carbolic acid.

The 16.7 percent of women who did not die from chemicals or drugs support the theory that Butte suicides used whatever implements were available and, perhaps, considered proper methods for their sex. One of these six women (Ana Ossenbrug) died of a fractured skull--in Los

Angeles. Four women shot themselves, a rate approximately equal to the nation's rate for female deaths by gunshot.¹¹⁵ The sixth woman, Margaret Whitford, whose suicide received attention earlier, ignited her clothes after soaking them with coal oil. No women died in Butte (or at least no women were reported as having done so) by hanging or strangulation, asphyxia, lacerations, drowning, or crushing; whereas on a national level approximately 11 percent of female suicides killed themselves by hanging or strangulation, approximately 16 percent by lacerations, and 8 percent by drowning (the other methods rated from between one-half a percent to approximately 3.5 percent).¹¹⁶ Such methods were available to Butte women: either they chose not to use them, or someone else chose not to report such deaths.

Butte men as a group selected a much wider range of suicide methods. A majority of men, in almost equal numbers, chose either guns or chemical poisonings as their instruments of death. As for women, men found poisons readily available. But for men the possibility of possessing ready access to a gun, or acquiring one without undue notice, was probably much greater.

Self-lacerations comprised the third most popular suicide method for Butte men during 1907-1914; 12.5 percent of all listed male suicides killed themselves in this manner as opposed to a 75 percent total for poisonings and

shootings. Six men slit their throats with razors, four with knives, one with the sharpened end of a pewter spoon,¹¹⁷ and one man used a knife to cut open his abdomen.

In addition to those methods above (poisonings, shootings, and lacerations), only one category remains that encompasses the deaths of several men--that of hangings. Nine men hanged themselves up during the eight-year period. One used a clothesline rope, another a broomwire. The remaining four of the 119 men each chose a unique, perhaps more gruesome, death. Paulmer Paulson met his death through decapitation; Thomas Hendrickson (also known as Toimi Eitkajara), a twenty-six-year-old Finn, jumped down the Parrot shaft¹¹⁸ (a method of death which may explain a few of the many deaths miners came to by falling down shafts, although Hendrickson's case is the only one recorded as a suicide); Tomo Pipi leaped from a fifth-story window of the State Savings Bank Building; and an unknown man drowned himself in a small pool of water after an unsuccessful attempt to cut his throat with a collapsible corkscrew.¹¹⁹ This last man's death was not classified as a suicide in the mortuary records, although an inquest so labeled it.

Drownings appear to have been ignored as a form of suicide in the Butte Mortuary Records, and it may be that several "drownings" were indeed suicides. Butte Mortuary Records recorded no suicides by drownings (although many persons drowned in the vicinity) at a time when nationally

an approximate 8 percent of female and 4 percent of male suicides drowned themselves.¹²⁰ Drownings are difficult to prove as suicidal (in the case just mentioned, witnesses saw the man jump into the pool), and authorities understandably might be reluctant to label a death suicidal when family members and others desired the death pronounced a "respectable" accident.

Some theorists might not consider the method of suicide as being of great, if any, consequence. Others assert the opposite, believing the means to be part of the decision to commit suicide. Halbwachs questions if one has the right to neglect methods when studying suicide "since every suicide results from the collaboration of decision and means," and because "plenty of suicides do not take place, or are not accomplished, simply because the means have been badly chosen."¹²¹ Hoffman also considered the means to be of consequence as he felt suggestion, or immitation, played a strong role in suicides, with readily available means causing an increase in the number of completed suicides.¹²² The means were certainly available in Butte during 1907-1914, and if the desired effect was self-destruction, the 155 plus persons this study examines chose their methods wisely.

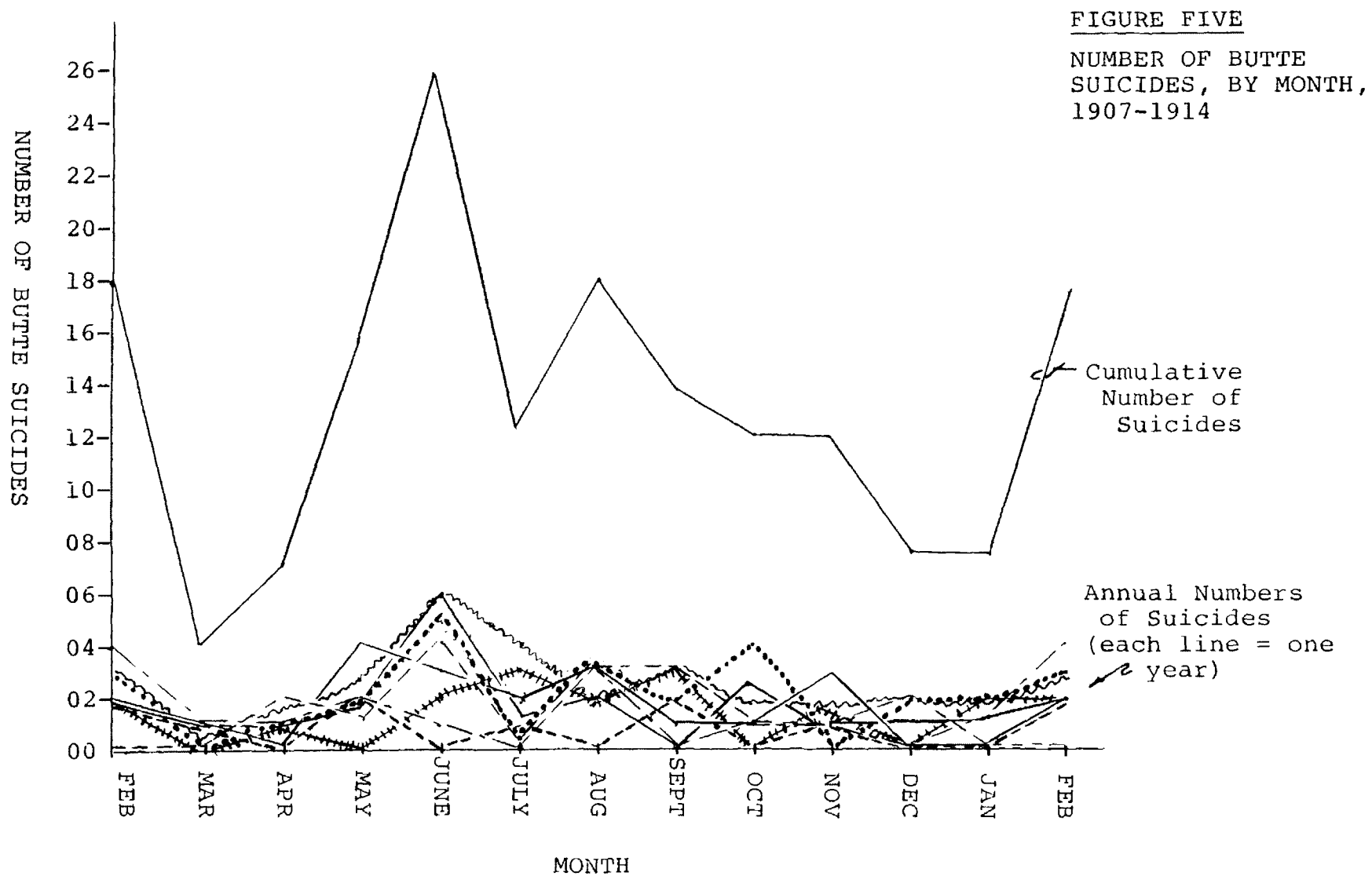
Years and Seasons

During the 416 weeks of 1907-1914, 155 persons

voluntarily ended their lives in the Western city of Butte, Montana. Had these deaths occurred at regular intervals they would have averaged one every 2.68 weeks, a horrible rate for a city of Butte's size or, as a reflection on humanity, in a city of any size. Butte's suicides, however, did not occur at even intervals of 2.68 weeks. As was seen in figure 3 of Part One, they varied yearly. They also varied by month and season.

Examining the numbers of suicides by months and seasons, for all eight years combined, gives the results shown in figure 5. June witnessed the greatest number of deaths during the entire period, twenty-four, followed by February and August at eighteen deaths each. The month of March saw the fewest number of deaths, four, with April's seven deaths being the next lowest number for a month. Deaths in the remaining months numbered from eight in December to sixteen in November. The total number of suicides rose and fell from month to month.

There does not seem to be a pattern to the suicides regarding holidays or climate. The months in which major holidays fall--January, April (or sometimes March), July, November, and December--were not peak suicide months in Butte. The time periods immediately before or after holidays did not witness major increases in suicides, and the opposite trend often occurred (this can also be seen by looking at the actual days on which Butte suicides



occurred). If anything, suicidal risk tended to decrease during holidays.

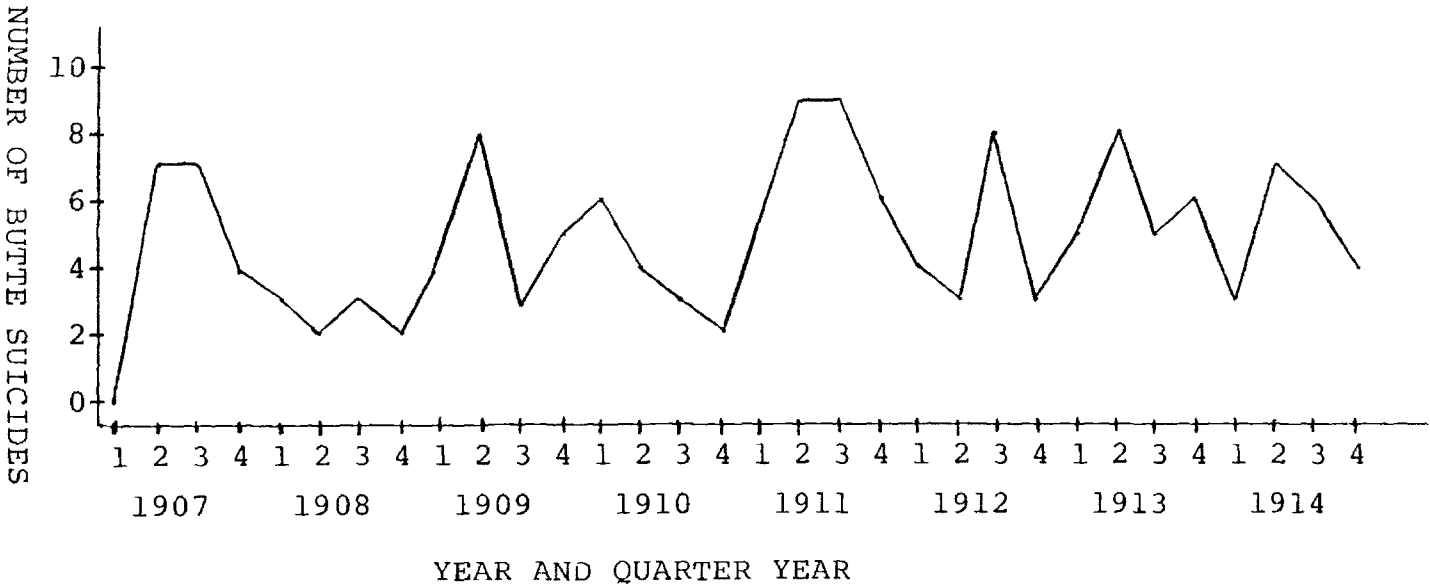
Temperature and weather variations appeared to have small effect on suicidal frequency. Although cumulatively June rated highest in numbers of suicides, it did not do so every year, nor is June necessarily the hottest time of the year in Butte's climate zone. In northern regions of the northern hemisphere cold weather is also an important factor in people's daily lives. February possessed the highest winter suicide rate, not necessarily due to plunging temperatures. If cold temperature alone increased suicide rates, one might expect January to exert a heavy toll of Butte suicides-- in some years. However, in no year did January exceed February in rates, and in three years (1907, 1908, and 1914) no suicides occurred in January. The monthly suicide rate fluctuated independently of major weather conditions; for example, the number of suicides consistently dropped sharply between June and July although weather patterns do not register corresponding sharp variations on a year to year basis. Peak rates in months of various seasons and weather conditions occurred yearly, with the early portions of spring and winter registering the fewest suicides. Although harsh or prolonged extremes in weather conditions might precipitate suicidal actions among some persons already so inclined, as a general rule weather tended to exert small influence on the frequency of Butte

suicides as a whole. Contemporaries studying suicide in the United States also observed this lack of weather influence.¹²³

As indicated in Part One, the yearly suicide rate per 100,000 Butte citizens fluctuated quite noticeably during 1907-1914, with 1911 being the peak suicide year, followed by 1909 and 1907 respectively. The rate fell and remained relatively low after 1911. At first glance this suicide cycle appears extreme, and perhaps inexplicable, in light of Butte's history during the eight inclusive years. In the autumn of 1907 the Anaconda Mining Company shut down its mines, throwing virtually all Butte miners out of work. The unemployment in the mines, besides the ramifications for the mine workers themselves, might also be expected to adversely affect all those who relied directly or indirectly upon miner trade--the bartenders, shopkeepers, clerical workers, etcetera--thus leading to an overall increase in the Butte suicide rate. However, as is seen in figure 6, the numbers of suicides decreased after the second half of 1907 and stayed low beyond the reopening of the mines in early March 1908.

The close of the eight-year period, 1914, again witnessed a mine shutdown in August, one that the Anaconda Standard¹²⁴ reported as having caused the layoffs of 2,000 men in Butte. The year was also one of labor strife and culminated in the imposition of martial law in early

FIGURE SIX
NUMBER OF BUTTE
SUICIDES, BY YEAR
AND QUARTER-YEAR,
1907-1914



November. In spite of the year's hardships, 1914 possessed one of the three lowest suicide rates of the eight-year time span of this study. Between 1908 and early 1914 no major problems appeared to have unduly disturbed the city, yet 1909 and 1911 witnessed the highest two suicide rates of 1907-1914. Economic adversity for the city as a whole apparently did not increase Butte's suicide rate appreciably, if at all. Two statistical studies of American suicides during the period of this study, concluded that economic conditions did not determine the ultimate suicide rates in the United States.¹²⁵

If major economic changes in Butte did not cause the apparently extreme fluctuations in the city's suicide rate, what did? As shown in figure 6, when examined in terms of numbers of suicides per quarter year, it appears that the yearly fluctuations were not so extreme after all. Each year possessed its own crests and troughs, with the difference between the yearly variations being fairly insignificant (although the peak 1908 rate was below average).

The rise and fall of the numbers of suicides over short time periods, such as those in Butte during 1907-1914, may be explained partly by the effects of suggestion.¹²⁶ The Butte press provided Butte citizens with a continual barrage of information about suicide. Local newspapers ran stories of local, state, national, and international suicides.

Butte suicides frequently came in multiples and did so during the peak suicide years for the city, years which in most respects were relatively uneventful in Butte in regard to economic upheavals. Yet, 155 people do not kill themselves simply because a neighbor did so. Underlying conditions must exist to predispose these people to self-destruction. A major contemporary study of American suicide suggested that, in general, "suicidal frequency is governed by local conditions more or less permanent in character, whether racial, social, or economic."¹²⁷ This appears to have been the case for Butte.

Suicide Locale and Living Conditions

A printer suffering from rheumatism shot himself at the offices of the Butte Miner,¹²⁸ Hendrickson jumped down the Parrot mine shaft, a barber drank carbolic acid in his shop,¹²⁹ at least six persons died in the city and county jails (others tried to--Earl Gifford slashed his throat from ear to ear with the razor given to the prisoners for shaving on visitors' day and remained alive¹³⁰), several persons committed suicide out of town, but the majority of suicides ended their lives in their homes or boarding houses. Of the 92.3 percent of all Butte suicides of 1907-1914 who either died at their residences or for whom residences have been located, 90.9 percent lived within the city limits; and 88.1 percent lived both within the city limits and in the

northern one-half of town. The locations for the 92.3 percent whose addresses are known are shown in figure 7 and on the 1915 Sanborn insurance map in the Appendix. The twelve persons whose addresses are unmapped include Paulmer Paulson who died on the railroad tracks, three "unknown" men, and eight persons who died--and, it seems, lived--outside the city limits and beyond the Butte area as mapped by the Sanborn Company.

The majority of the suicides' residences in Butte fell within a limited area which contemporaries considered "congested." Saloons, boarding houses, the red-light district, the Chinese district, stores, banks, offices, churches, the Salvation Army, hotels, outhouses, theaters, dogs, occasional cows and other creatures (dead or alive), more boarding houses, private dwellings, and a respectable hunk of humanity all pressed upon each other for space.¹³¹ Butte as a whole could claim a high rate of physical congestion during the period of this study. In 1910, 7,474 dwellings and 8,586 families existed in the city. This gave Butte a rate of 1.15 families per dwelling, the highest ratio of the six Montana registration cities.¹³² In terms of total population, 5.24 persons shared each Butte dwelling. Only Great Falls possessed a higher rate of crowding with 5.48 persons sharing each dwelling.¹³³ These rates represent average conditions. In the "congested district," where the majority of Butte suicides lived, the number of persons per

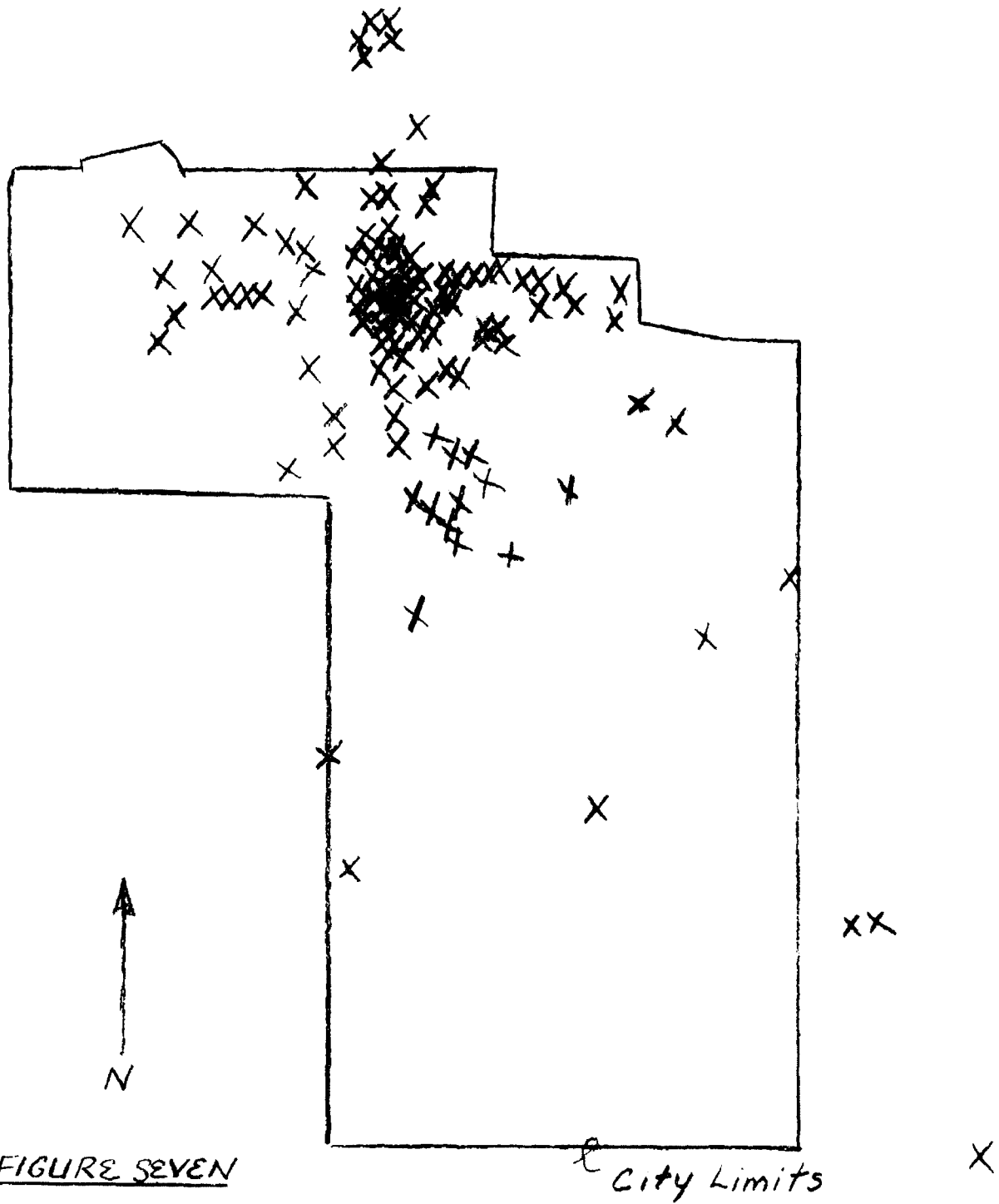


FIGURE SEVEN
MAP OF BUTTE
SUICIDE LOCATIONS

dwelling exceeded the city average with approximately 6.71 persons sharing each dwelling.¹³⁴ Manuscript census returns for 1900 and 1910 reveal that for many of Butte's suicide victims the ratio of persons per dwelling surpassed even the congested area's 6.71 average. They also reveal the working class status of most of the area's residents.

A hefty 55 percent of the 1907-1914 suicides lived in boarding houses. Of these approximately 64 percent lived in small boarding houses (those with under ten boarders), and approximately 36 percent lived in large boarding houses (those with more than ten boarders). Some of the persons who committed self-annihilation lived in boarding houses with thirty to fifty roomers. Another 3 percent of the Butte suicides lived in benevolent institutions. Approximately 31 percent of the suicides lived in private dwellings with their families and perhaps took in a boarder or two. Only about 11 percent of the suicides lived either alone (in what appeared to be a private dwelling) or with only one other person.¹³⁵

The huge percentage of persons who lived with others, and usually several others, appears to directly refute one suicide theory which asserts that merely having "someone living with the potential suicide" is "apparently one very good way to lower the suicide rate."¹³⁶ Or, if contrary to what appears to be the case, the congested living quarters of Butte--in particular, the congested area--did keep the

suicide rate substantially lower than it might otherwise have been, one might shudder to conceive the actual suicidal propensity felt by Butte citizens. Certainly the widespread use of drugs and alcohol in Butte (as suggested by mortality records, newspapers, and census mortality statistics) indicates a broader base of suicidal behavior than the numbers of deaths attributed directly to suicide describe.

It seems, however, that the Butte situation more definitively supports the results of a sociological study of Seattle, Washington suicides during 1915-1925. Calvin Schmid found a high correlation between the number of boarding houses and hotels and the suicide rate. Schmid explains the correlation by such an area's rate of mobility (numbers of persons coming in and out of the area), the impersonality of rooming houses and hotels, and the general anonymity of these downtown areas.¹³⁷

The Butte congested area, and to a decreasing extent in its surrounding areas, did possess a high mobility rate, with residents and nonresidents coming and leaving for work, business, and sometimes pleasure. Moreover, in examining census manuscript returns and comparing them with the residences of the suicide victims at the time of their death, one discovers an extremely high rate of turnover in the boarders, renters, and to a lesser extent the owners of these Butte residences. In addition to this, most of the suicide victims lived in areas without strong ethnic

distinctions. Native born Americans from various regions of the nation lived next door--or across the hall--from immigrants from Germany, England, Ireland, Finland, Italy, and other nations. This might indicate a lack of community cohesiveness, especially in those instances where neighbors did not even speak the same language.

Mobility within the Butte suicide locale, and the diverse ethnicity of its residents, may have led to the impersonality and anonymity found in Schmid's high suicide locale. Certainly in several Butte suicide cases this occurred. The story of Joe, The Harper, is one of the more extreme instances. Joe resided in a south Main Street lodging house for six weeks previous to his death without ever registering. He paid his rent in advance each week, was a quiet lodger, and kept to himself. When he shot himself in the head, after destroying all identifying effects, no one knew his name, his origin, or what to do with his body. All that was known about Joe was that he loved music and that his prized possession was an expensive harp. Authorities decided to sell the harp to pay for his burial expenses, and identified him in the Butte Mortuary Records as "Harper, Joe The."¹³⁸ In another case, the clerk of an open basement lodging establishment insisted that the deceased, found in a bed, had never registered or been seen previous to the discovery of the corpse.¹³⁹

Although the density of the congested area may not have

increased nonphysical contact among its inhabitants, physical proximity did increase one type of sharing amongst its members--the sharing of bacteria. Residents of the area possessed an average 335 cubic feet of interior air space, an amount determined totally insufficient to maintain health, and an inadequacy compounded by a lack of proper ventilation.¹⁴⁰ Unsanitary conditions further added to the health risk. Filth was often a general condition. Many residents owned no garbage cans and threw their refuse and slops into backyards, alleys, and streets. Where disposal was not otherwise provided, sewage piled up in whatever available space existed. Some residents received a flow of sewage from streets of higher elevation. Residents of other areas complained of dead dogs piling up. Deceased animals of other species might also lay around for days at a time. Insects attracted to the garbage and sewage piles entered houses through screenless windows. The crowded rooms often needed a good disinfecting--along with their furniture, bedding, and occupants. Contagious diseases such as tuberculosis were rife,¹⁴¹ and, as will be shown in the following section, tuberculosis and other illnesses played a major role in Butte suicide.

Another malady common to the congested district, one also not confined totally to it, was that of violence. Newspapers reported a fairly steady stream of shootings, fights, wife abuse (no instances of husband abuse are

recalled), and homicides. Mortuary records support the theory of widespread violence, as do census mortality statistics. At least one in-depth study of suicide supports the theory that suicide and other forms of violence can be directly related, with the rates of one rising with the rates of the other.¹⁴²

In summary, although living conditions in the area of Butte in which the greatest number of self-immolations took place may have been exciting, and in some ways pleasurable, they were not necessarily conducive to mental, emotional, and physical health. This factored directly and indirectly into the suicide motives of 1907-1914 as the following pages will demonstrate.

Motives for Suicide

I think he realized that there was nothing left for him to do, that his condition was bad and h[e] realized that there really was no cure for him, that he was afflicted with tuberculosis ...¹⁴³

Lots of times we have trouble,--for instance, they won't take them in if they have consumption in the hospital ... we always do the best we can ...¹⁴⁴

A miner with consumption [is] better off dead.¹⁴⁵

I have went the route, but it was trouble that made me drink, and then I would lose all control of myself. If I did not spend all my money some one would take it from me. I know I cannot be what I ought to be or what I want to be; so that is the reason ...¹⁴⁶

Baby died, and as she died I want to die too. No one cares for me; life is empty without baby, and I am unable to pay for her funeral. Let me die, for then I will be happy.¹⁴⁷

Although one cannot precisely know the motivation behind another's choice to end one's life, newspaper and coroner's inquests do reveal information regarding the person's circumstances and supposed motives for suicide that aid the researcher in analyzing the deaths of numerous persons in a given period of time. To this information the historian can add his knowledge of the time and the place and, it is hoped, increased perception of the situation as provided by the passage of years.

One hundred and thirty of the Butte suicides were researched for suicide motives. Of these, forty-two (or 32.3 percent) appear to have been caused directly by ill

health. In all probability, the percent is actually higher with incomplete investigations by contemporaries having obscured pertinent information about many suicides. In fact, for twenty-seven (a full 20.7 percent) of the suicides, sources provided no motive--although several were summarily dismissed as being caused by "temporary insanity." Unknown motives accounted for the deaths of ten women and seventeen men.

When newspapers and coroner's inquests did point to illness as the cause of death they did not always define the illness. Where sources identified the illness, tuberculosis, or miner's consumption, was most likely to be the disease named. As discussed in the last section, the majority of the Butte suicides of 1907-1914 inhabited the congested district, or areas nearby, where contagious diseases caused more illness and death than in any other part of the city. Tuberculosis alone caused more deaths in the entire city of Butte than did anything else (as discussed in the section on Suicide as a Cause of Death). In a time previous to worker's compensation, when hospitals¹⁴⁸ were not obliged to accept those with contagious diseases and various organizations (such as the Irish fraternal¹⁴⁹ organization) often fell short of the funds needed to aid sick workers, and when tuberculosis was considered fatal, it is not surprising that those suffering from tuberculosis or other illnesses might turn their thoughts toward death. And such diseases did not limit themselves to the male sex. The

150
 woman Addison Lewis attempted to kill was tubercular.
 Sickness can be attributed a direct motive in the suicides
 of ten women and thirty-two men of the 130 suicides
 investigated.

Closely tied to illness as a reason for self-immolation
 was that of financial worries. Thirty-four suicides (26.1
 percent) involved work-related problems. In some instances
 unemployment and business failures did provide the major
 suicide motive--such as in the case of Joseph Sehringer, a
 once prosperous butcher who had been reduced to utter
 poverty before his death¹⁵¹; and that of Lambert Dailey, a
 carpenter, who after brooding over being forced to spend
 Christmas in the poorhouse slashed his throat open with a
 butcher knife.¹⁵² In most instances, however, financial
 problems occurred in large part because of illness. A man
 unemployed because of sickness lacked the means of
 supporting himself and his family if he had one. Women too
 committed suicide over financial worries. Carrie Lewis was
 ill, and fears over her husband's inability to find
 employment often woke her up during the night. Before
 killing herself with strychnine, she suggested to her
 husband more than once that they commit suicide together.
 Lewis's husband also felt she might have worried that he
 would leave her.¹⁵³

Marital and nonmarital love problems provided suicide
 motives for twenty-eight persons--nine women and nineteen
 men. As previously mentioned, five men had personal

relationships so problematic that they either killed or attempted to kill their mates. None of the female suicides studied attempted or succeeded in murder. Most of the cases involving love relationships concerned jealousy, unrequited love, and engagements that did not work out. One woman for whom troubled love relationships provided a suicide motive experienced problems both in the marital and nonmarital sectors, as well as financial problems leading to extreme mental agitation. Bonnie Starr was deserted by her husband and eventually forced into prostitution to support their child. She placed her child in a Spokane home and worked first in Mullan, Idaho and then in Butte's red-light district. While in Butte she became involved with a man with whom she soon experienced difficulties, and finding herself unable to pay her child's boarding fees, Bonnie Starr swallowed strychnine. Her dying words were, "Take care of my baby." Women in Butte's restricted district¹⁵⁴ collected the money needed for her burial expenses.

Seven persons, three men and four women, killed themselves due to grief over the death of a loved one. Two did so because of the death of a child: Mrs. Ana Ossenbrug, mentioned earlier, and Grace Becker, whose child had died of carbolic acid poisoning several months before Grace Becker (whose husband it seemed had also left her) committed suicide with bichloride of mercury.¹⁵⁵ Two persons committed self-destruction at least partly because of the death of a brother, two because of the death of a sister; and the

deaths of a mother, a cousin, and a friend provided motives for the remaining three suicides.

In addition to the motives above, at least two women committed suicide over being forced into prostitution, five persons because in addition to other factors they simply did not like the West, two because their parents scolded them, four because of fears of persecution by their real or imagined enemies, and one person's death was attributed to depression over isolation. Isolation of course may have contributed to any or all of the other 129 suicides. Another factor of several of the self-immolations involved the use of alcohol. Sixteen persons, one female and fifteen males, drank excessively in the period preceding their deaths. Because several suicide cases indicated more than one motive for death, the above numbers, in total, exceed 130.

Butte citizens chose to end their own lives for a variety of reasons, the most prevalent motives being illness, financial worries, and love difficulties. Some persons experienced all three of these, other persons experienced different problems. Butte men and women committed suicide for similar reasons, often in equal proportions.

PART THREE

Conclusion

Butte, Montana possessed a phenomenally high suicide rate during the years 1907-1914. Males, particularly those over age forty-four and single, were at greatest suicidal risk. The rate for Butte women, which in comparison to national and international ratios exceeded that of Butte men, peaked before the age of thirty-four. Married women were at greater suicidal risk at younger ages, but as the women aged their marriages tended to exert at least some positive influences in their lives and protected them more from suicide than did the lifestyles of nonmarried women. Immigrants and Protestants possessed a higher suicidal frequency than did native born Americans and non-Protestants. Emigration factored highly in the nonimmigrant self-immolations. Butte suicides typically came from low or low-middle class occupational groups with miners being at somewhat greater risk than nonminers. The fact that Butte was a company mining town probably explains part of Butte's high suicidal frequency. The mining industry controlled the local economy, much of its politics, and influenced the physical atmosphere of the city.

Fluctuations in the suicide rate in Butte did not follow significant patterns in regard to weather, nor did

economic upheavals or other external events in Butte raise the self-immolation rate. It appears rather that day to day economic distress, poor health, undesirable living conditions in general, and personal, family, or romantic problems kept the suicide rate high. It should be remembered too that with the high proportion of men in the city, large numbers of males could never expect to have a family as long as they stayed in Butte. Although women also lived in boarding houses and hotels, single men far outnumbered them in these establishments--which tended to be overcrowded, unsanitary, and often impersonal. Those persons who lived nearby, or who worked in the mines, could be expected to share the germs of illness and despair carried by their neighbors. Although individual motives for suicide varied, hopelessness was common to them all.

Those who killed themselves in Butte during 1907-1914 took self-destruction to its final culmination. Others overindulged themselves in alcohol and drugs to such an extent that they finally died from alcohol and drug-related¹⁵⁶ maladies. Countless others attempted suicide but did not succeed in their endeavors. Clearly, personal problems and social maladjustments affected more Butte individuals than the number of completed suicides alone suggest. One contemporary statistician blamed such widespread social discontent and its manifestations on "the diseased notion of modern life ... that material advancement and prosperity are the end, the aim, and general purpose of human life." To

this, "the all absorbing aim, the struggle for wealth," were subordinated "religion and morality, art and science, education and recreation."¹⁵⁷

Certainly not all members of society could be expected to subscribe to the material theory of life's purpose. Yet, even those who did not subscribe would feel the subtle, and not so subtle, pressures--in the form of expectations, standards, and judgments--exerted by those who did. For those who came to Butte and the West in hopes of bettering their social or financial status--be it through mining, ranching, farming, or whatever--the internal condemnation felt when "success" proved elusive might extract considerable toll on reserves already too weak to carry on much longer. If they had come to the land of opportunity, to the Golden West, and failed, whose fault was it but their own? Yes, they might blame the company, the land, the dry seasons, or any other external factor. Yet it would take a very strong or unique person not to place at least some of the blame on himself--for having been duped, for working so hard for nothing, for spending what little they had for the wrong thing, for making any minor mistake, for having come in the first place.

Burdened with sickness, financial worries, loneliness, overcrowding, the deaths and desertions of loved ones, violence, and self-condemnation, it may have taken very little additional pressure to throw these people over the edge. Seeing no promise of anything better coming into

their lives, the choice to die may have seemed the rational decision, and that of continuing on, the irrational one. They had come to the end of the line. America and the West had let them down, and it was time to get off the train. So they did.

PART FOUR

List of the Dead

(definite suicides only)

| <u>Name(s)</u> | <u>Date of Death</u> |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Abrahamson, Oscar | June 11, 1913 |
| Armstrong, Louise (Hattie Wallace) | May 2, 1908 |
| Asseltine, Charles McDonald | August 23, 1911 |
| Bates, Charles | December 16, 1913 |
| Beatley, John, Jr. | September 3, 1907 |
| Becker, Grace | October 12, 1913 |
| Becker, Otto | August 29, 1914 |
| Benson, Mary | June 14, 1909 |
| Bergland, Peter | September 27, 1912 |
| Bezek, Joseph | February 2, 1913 |
| Biavaschi, Tranquilo | February 2, 1910 |
| Bires, Andy | July 24, 1914 |
| Bliss, William | October 1, 1909 |
| Boquist, Richard | August 9, 1913 |
| Bosanko, Mary | September 12, 1908 |
| Boyle, Joseph | June 28, 1911 |
| Bradley, Georgia V. | March 16, 1914 |
| Brannigan, Peter | May 27, 1910 |
| Brown, Grace ("Buster" Brown) | May 11, 1911 |
| Burnett, John | July 2, 1912 |
| Ceresa, Antone | September 18, 1911 |
| Cobb, James Arthur | April 20, 1907 |
| Cockrell, Charles W. | February 2, 1910 |
| Collette, Nettie | June 10, 1909 |
| Colosemia, Santo | June 26, 1909 |
| Cosgrove, Joseph P. | November 12, 1914 |
| Crowl, Erastus | October 10, 1913 |
| Crowley, Patrick | February 1, 1908 |
| Dailey, Lambert | January 2, 1912 |
| Dewill, Pearl | October 13, 1909 |
| Eaten, George | June 7, 1907 |
| Elmberg, Nellie | December 11, 1911 |
| Eva, Elizabeth J. | June 29, 1907 |
| Ferguson, George | January 30, 1913 |
| Fiskum, Harold | May 21, 1913 |
| Foley, Frank | April 4, 1909 |
| Giammungnani, Renaldo | December 6, 1907 |
| Gilmore, Charles | May 24, 1909 |
| Glaze, Paul | February 19, 1909 |
| Goodchild, George | February 1, 1910 |

| <u>Name(s)</u> | <u>Date of Death</u> |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Hammond, Fred (Fred Hamel) | November 25, 1911 |
| Harper, Joe The | June 4, 1909 |
| Harriman, Lena | February 8, 1913 |
| Harrington, Michael, Jr. | June 18, 1907 |
| Harrington, Phillip | August 15, 1907 |
| Harris, James F. (John) | June 14, 1913 |
| Hendrickson, Thomas (Toimi Eitkajara) | February 28, 1911 |
| Hermanson, Victor | September 26, 1914 |
| Heylin, John | August 16, 1907 |
| Holmes, Alonzo L. | September 27, 1913 |
| Hooper, John T. | May 11, 1911 |
| Huffman, Wilbur | October 3, 1910 |
| Innes, Charles | June 1, 1912 |
| Johnson, William | November 12, 1909 |
| Joyce, Myrtle | August 23, 1910 |
| Keane, Peter | August 5, 1914 |
| Kelto, Jacob | February 13, 1912 |
| Kendil, Rose | September 27, 1907 |
| Kennedy, Joseph | March 25, 1908 |
| Kilgallon, Thomas S. | August 2, 1910 |
| Klaoden, William | June 10, 1911 |
| Klosna, Nick | May 24, 1914 |
| Kobert, Martin | December 26, 1912 |
| Lacroix, Hermidas | October 11, 1913 |
| Lagrange, Vivian | February 27, 1909 |
| Lambrecht, Otto Ernest | June 10, 1909 |
| Lamott, Perry (Pierre) | February 26, 1911 |
| Lampi, Alfred | February 21, 1913 |
| Laulaja, Matt | February 2, 1911 |
| Leary, John (O'Leary) | November 18, 1912 |
| Lebowishier, Joseph (Labisher) | August 31, 1913 |
| Lepetich, John | June 3, 1913 |
| Lewis, Addison | April 22, 1911 |
| Lewis, Carrie | February 25, 1908 |
| Lowry, William | June 14, 1912 |
| Lucey, Robert E. | October 5, 1913 |
| Luoma, Andrew | July 18, 1912 |
| Macky, Mabel | May 2, 1909 |
| Maki, Erick | October 7, 1911 |
| McCarthy, Timothy | July 9, 1907 |
| McDonald, Donald | May 22, 1914 |
| McDonald, Rod | December 9, 1909 |
| McIntyre, Helen | June 4, 1914 |
| McKinley, Jessie | September 12, 1908 |
| Mensky, Annie | July 17, 1911 |
| Miller, William G. | August 18, 1909 |
| Morton, Mazie | June 30, 1914 |
| Mott, Frederick L. | June 1, 1914 |

| <u>Name(s)</u> | <u>Date of Death</u> |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Moyle, Della Gertrude | December 6, 1907 |
| Moyle, Ida May | July 20, 1908 |
| Murphy, Nora | November 4, 1908 |
| Nelson, Mammie | May 17, 1907 |
| Niemi, Tikla | May 30, 1911 |
| Northcott, Amanda | November 11, 1910 |
| O'Brian, William | March 10, 1910 |
| O'Connell, Philip | July 25, 1909 |
| O'Neil, Emma | November 30, 1911 |
| O'Neil, William | August , 1912 |
| O'Roricky, Peter | August 24, 1907 |
| Oppenheimer, Leah | October 22, 1909 |
| Ossenbrug, Anna M. (Ana) | December 25, 1913 |
| Ossenbrug, Henry | June 5, 1913 |
| Paqula, John | July 29, 1914 |
| Patterson, James H. | November 3, 1914 |
| Paulson, Palmer | March 12, 1909 |
| Pecher, Joseph | January 12, 1909 |
| Perala, John | August 5, 1914 |
| Peterson, Hugo | August 13, 1910 |
| Pipi, Tomo (Tom Papa) | October 8, 1914 |
| Pong, Chung Tai (The Pong) | June 4, 1910 |
| Powell, Frances | January 1, 1911 |
| Powers, William | April 16, 1910 |
| Ralph, Caleb | February 5, 1914 |
| Rider, John | January 2, 1912 |
| Rodini, Alexander | May 29, 1913 |
| Roper, Wallace | June 6, 1913 |
| Ryan, Dennis | November 22, 1912 |
| Sampson, William | December 20, 1911 |
| Sandol, Carl | June 23, 1911 |
| Sangriff, William | August 31, 1909 |
| Schaefer, Joseph | July 1, 1911 |
| Schamer, Fred | April 29, 1907 |
| Schneider, Henrich | September 1, 1907 |
| Scott, Henry | January 5, 1913 |
| Sehringer, Joseph | January 21, 1911 |
| Sharkey, Hugh | May 11, 1914 |
| Shea, Batt | May 21, 1914 |
| Smith, Bert | July 7, 1912 |
| Smith, Edward | May 29, 1908 |
| Snow, James | April 21, 1913 |
| Sockerson, Fred | August 13, 1912 |
| St. Jean, Edward | June 24, 1909 |
| Starr, Bonnie | February 2, 1912 |
| Strand, Paul | June 30, 1911 |
| Thompson, Mary E. | October 14, 1907 |
| Thompson, Terrence | April 13, 1912 |
| Thylin, John | February 1, 1914 |

| <u>Name(s)</u> | <u>Date of Death</u> |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Tippett, Josiah | September 23, 1913 |
| Tong, Henry | June 1, 1911 |
| Toughill, John | September 14, 1911 |
| Traynor, Sadie | November 21, 1907 |
| True, William | November 30, 1908 |
| Tung, Hom | July 2, 1911 |
| Tussila, Peter | September 13, 1912 |
| Unknown man | June 27, 1907 |
| Unknown man | February 5, 1910 |
| Unknown man | September 6, 1912 |
| Unknown man | November 14, 1914 |
| Vidger, George | August 17, 1911 |
| Wagner, Charles | October 29, 1911 |
| Wert, Edwin A. | January 22, 1910 |
| Whitford, Margaret | July 14, 1911 |
| Wilhelm, Mary (Rose) | September 11, 1911 |
| Williams, Geniva | May 5, 1910 |
| Winn, James | August 12, 1913 |

ENDNOTES

1. From the suicide note of George Goodchild who died from taking laudanum on February 1, 1911. Said note recorded in the Anaconda Standard (hereafter cited as AS), February 2, 1911, p.3.
2. AS, August 17, 1907, pp.1 and 9; Butte Mortuary Records (hereafter cited as BMR), 1907-1914; on microfilm at the University of Montana Archives, originals in Butte.
3. Della Gertrude Moyle: AS, December 7, 1907, p.1 and 4; AS, December 8, 1907, p.7; BMR. Ida May Moyle: BMR; Coroner's Inquest No. 6051.
4. The Butte Evening News (hereafter cited as BEN), May 5, 1908, p.1; BEN, May 6, 1908, p.2; AS, May 6, 1908, p.11; and BMR.
5. BEN, September 15, 1908, p.5; AS, September 13, 1908, p.1; BMR.
6. BEN, March 12, 1909, p.1; BEN, March 13, 1909, p.5; AS, March 13, 1909, p.9; BMR.
7. BEN, July 26, 1908, p.1; BEN, July 27, 1908, p.8; BEN, July 28, 1909, p.8; AS, July 26, 1909, pp.1 and 7; BMR.
8. The Butte Inter-Mountain, August 3, 1910, p.3; AS, August 3, 1910, p.1; BMR.
9. AS, July 15, 1911, p.1; BMR.
10. AS, September 12, 1911, p.7 and September 13, 1911, p.6; BMR.
11. AS, July 12, 1912, p.11; BMR.
12. AS, November 23, 1912, p.6; BMR.
13. AS, April 22, 1913, p.7; BMR.
14. AS, September 27, 1913, p.6; BMR.
15. AS, September 28, 1913, p.10; BMR.

16. AS, May 25, 1914, p.8; AS, May 25, 1914, p.9 (separate article); AS, May 27, 1914, p.7; BMR.
17. AS, October 9, 1914, p.12; BMR; Coroner's Inquest No. 7742.
18. Compiled from statistics found in: Ruth Shonle Cavan, Suicide (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), p.9 (first published in 1928); Rev. Adolph Dominic Frenay, The Suicide Problem in the United States (Boston: Gorham Press, 1927), pp.30-40; Frederick L. Hoffman, Suicide Problems (Newark, NJ: Prudential Press, 1928), pp.21, 186, 213; Maurice Halbwachs, translated by Harold Goldblatt, The Causes of Suicide (New York: Free Press, 1978), p.59 (first published in 1930).
19. Hoffman, pp.21, 186; Cavan, p.9.
20. Cavan, p.9; Frenay, pp.30-40; Hoffman, pp.21-22.
21. Frenay, p.39.
22. See Hoffman, pp.5-75 and Frenay, pp.20-29.
23. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Mortality Statistics: 1914 (hereafter cited as BCMS:[date]), p.10; BCMS:1905), pp.5-7.
24. BCMS:1914, pp.67-69.
25. For the rates graphed see either Hoffman, pp.8-9 or BCMS for the year(s) in question.
26. Figures for the total number of urban versus rural suicides were unavailable for 1911. Data for all other years from charts found in BCMS:1907-1914.
27. Figures for suicide rates per 100,000 population were unavailable for 1909. Data for all other years compiled from charts found in BCMS:1907-1908 and BCMS:1910-1914.
28. It might also be noted that an increase or decrease in urban suicide is normally paralleled by a similar increase or decrease in rural suicide. This can be seen by the graph for 1907-1914 and is supported also for the entire 1900 to 1922 period by Frenay, p.24.
29. Frenay, p.45.
30. Hoffman, pp.186-187. The list for urban areas is more extensive than that for individual nations due to the more accurate and readily available records for the

cities.

31. Ibid.
32. Frenay, pp.30-40; Halbwachs, pp.75-108.
33. Frenay, p.63. BCMS also gives this information.
34. I begin with the year 1910 because it was the year during which Montana, and several other states, joined the registration area and because it was the year of the study for which the Mortality Statistics began to make such specifications.
35. BCMS:1910, p.62; BCMS:1911, p.36; BCMS:1913, p.30; BCMS:1914, p.33; see Hoffman, p.220, for 1912.
36. Frenay, p.64.
37. BCMS:1910, p.62; BCMS:1911, p.36; BCMS:1913, p.30; BCMS:1914, p.33; figures for 1912 for second through fifth positions are taken from Hoffman, p.72.
38. Frenay, p.64.
39. Hoffman, p.72.
40. Ibid.
41. Frenay, pp.45-46; Hoffman, pp.134 and 172.
42. BCMS:1910-1914.
43. Suicides per 100,000 population for 1907, 1908, and 1909 were estimated by relating suicides recorded in the Butte Mortuary Records to census population statistics (BCMS:1910).
44. Chart compiled from figures given by Hoffman, pp.169-170.
45. BCMS:1910-1914.
46. Compiled from charts in BCMS:1910-1914.
47. Compiled from sources already cited for each category of suicide rate.
48. Nor did they necessarily tell the story of most urban or rural areas. The Census Bureau itself stated that suicides were, in general, underreported. For an example of this see BCMS:1914, p.33.

49. These persons are: Joseph Lebowishier, d.1913; Helen McIntyre, d.1914; William Sangriff, d.1909; James Snow, d.1913; unknown man, d.1907; unknown man, d.1912.
50. The Butte Miner, April 6, 1907, p.6; BMR.
51. AS, March 30, 1908, p.5; BMR; Coroner's Inquest No. 6010.
52. Mary Wilson: The Butte Inter-Mountain, August 16, 1910, p.1; BMR. Madeline Powell: AS, September 29, 1913, p.7; BMR.
53. For an overview of Butte's early years see Montana Writer's Project, Copper Camp (New York: Hastings House, 1943).
54. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Abstract of Census with Supplement for Montana (hereafter cited as Thirteenth Census Abstract), p.569; BCMS:1914, p.44.
55. Thirteenth Census Abstract, p.594. See Copper Camp, pp.100-101 and Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States for Silver Bow County for data on the Butte Native American population.
56. Thirteenth Census Abstract, p.594.
57. Ibid., p.583.
58. Ibid., p.586.
59. For an overview of health hazards and their effects on the Butte population, see the Butte local papers, mortuary records, and coroner's inquest records. For a specific discussion on such matters see Brian Shovers, "The Perils of Working in the Butte Underground: Industrial Fatalities in the Copper Mines, 1880-1920," Montana, The Magazine of Western History (Spring 1987), pp.26-39; and David M. Emmons, A Fair Living: The World of Butte's Irish Miners, 1875-1925 (forthcoming from the University of Illinois Press, 1989).
60. A multitude of articles and books have been written glorifyinng Butte's past; see Mary Murphy and Bill Walker, "Butte, Montana: A Select Bibliography" (mimeographed, 1980).
61. As will be shown later the predominance of male

suicide by no means confined itself to Butte. Other factors which likewise might appear unique to Butte will also be discussed in the context of national or international suicide in following pages.

62. Data presented above were mainly from the Butte Mortuary Records although in some instances newspapers and coroner's inquests were used to fill in vacancies where the mortuary records were incomplete.
63. Excluding the category of "Death by All Other Causes." This category is excluded from all following computations also.
64. BCMS:1910, pp.88-89.
65. Ibid., pp. 98-99.
66. Ibid.
67. BCMS:1914, pp.66-67 and 80-81. One might note that in 1914 suicide ranked twelfth in principal causes of death for the entire registration area and eleventh for the urban area and for Butte. Also, in 1914 less than six times more persons died of tuberculosis of the lungs in Butte, and four and three-quarters times more of nonviolence than did those who died of suicide.
68. Unless otherwise indicated, or previously cited (such as population figures, rates, etc.), the statistical data here and below is taken primarily from the BMR, with local newspapers and coroner's inquests as sources of information where the BMR are incomplete.
69. For examples, see Emile Durkheim, Suicide (New York: Free Press, 1962), p.71; Ronald W. Maris, Social Forces in Urban Suicide (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1969), p.92;; Calvin F. Schmid, "Suicide in Seattle, 1915-1925," University of Washington Publications in Social Sciences, vol. 5, 1928-1935 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, n.d.), pp.10 and 61; Hoffman, p.17; Frenay, p.72.
70. For numbers of males and females, see Thirteenth Census Abstract, p.594.
71. Frenay, pp.72 and 77.
72. Hoffman, p.173.
73. See Maris, pp.96-98; Halbwachs, pp.44-53.

74. Ibid.
75. Frenay, p.84; Calvin, p.40. For a discussion of Durkheim and Morselli on marital status and the effects of the family on suicide, see Halbwachs, pp.128-156.
76. Computations for percentages of population here and in following pages are based on figures in The Thirteenth Census Abstract, pp.586 and 594.
77. Frenay, p.84.
78. This difference in the sexes would appear even more pronounced when the suicides of unknown marital status are considered. Of these, thirteen were males and the other was a female member of the red-light district. All appear to have been without marital attachments.
79. Maris, p.110.
80. Bert Smith: AS, July 9, 1912, p.7; AS, July 10, 1912, p.8; AS, July 11, 1912, p.9; BMR. Philip O'Connell: BEN, July 26, 1909, pp. 1 and 8; AS, July 28, 1909, p.8; BMR.
81. Lewis Addison: AS, April 23, 1911, pp.1 and 4; BMR. William Powers: AS, April 17, 1910, pp.1 and 3; BMR. Henrich Schneider, September 2, 1907, p.5; AS, September 4, 1907, p.9; BMR.
82. Maris, p.111.
83. Halbwachs, pp.128-156; Maris (in Durkheim and his own study), p.108.
84. The distribution of ages here has been grouped so as to correspond with available census information for the total Butte population.
85. Hoffman, p.173. Because the national suicide rate did not change substantially from 1907-1914, Butte rates for the entire eight-year period have been compared to Hoffman's five-year study.
86. In view of the small suicide base for this age period for Butte women, the rate should be viewed with some degree of skepticism.
87. Ibid.
88. Hoffman, p.173.

89. Again, caution is advised when considering the status of males over age sixty-four due to the small size of the sample.
90. This is done to correct for possible errors in the rates for divorced and widowed men as the sampling for them is so small.
91. These problems will be discussed in later sections.
92. For Ida May Moyle, see footnote 3. Nettie Colette: AS, June 11, 1909, p.1; BMR.
93. Rates for females are computed here for ages 24-44 instead of 24-34.
94. These theories are fairly common in suicide studies. For an example see Maris, pp.112-113.
95. AS, August 30, 1914, p.6. Poem quoted directly from the newspaper. See BMR also for background information on Becker.
96. See the unpublished work of David Emmons for information on Butte wages versus the actual cost of living.
97. The theory that immigrant suicide rates tended to reflect those of their native land---although they normally increased--was supported by Hoffman's statistical research of several decades duration. See Hoffman, pp.14 and 128; also, Frenay, pp.135-140.
98. Frenay, p.139; Hoffman, pp.141 and 128.
99. Frenay, pp.140 and 75.
100. See the unpublished work of David Emmons.
101. Frenay, p.75.
102. See Emile Durkheim, Suicide, for his theory on suicide in relation to abrupt changes in a person's life.
103. Leah Oppenheimer: AS, December 23, 1907, p.7; BMR. Ana Ossenbrug: AS, December 28, 1913; BMR. Henry Ossenbrug: AS, June 10, 1913, p.10; BMR.
104. See Schmid, p.35 for his ideas on the type of person predisposed to move West and how these personal traits, "individualistic, restless, and unsatisfied" relate to suicide.

105. R.L. Polk and Company, Butte City Directories: 1907-1914, vols. 21-28 (Helena, MT: Polk).
106. See Halbwachs, pp.157-191, for a discussion of the relationship between suicide and religion. Durkheim, Morselli, and Krose are emphasized.
107. See the unpublished work of David Emmons.
108. AS, February 3, 1910, pp.1 and 3; BMR.
109. This will be discussed in a later section.
110. I was not able to locate any reliable statistics on United States suicides by occupation.
111. One need only skim the newspapers to realize how readily available poisons were. Frederick Hoffman also commented upon this and advocated poison and gun control. See Hoffman, pp.140-141.
112. AS, December 7, 1907, pp.1 and 4.
113. See Frenay, pp.69-70 for information on corrosive sublimate, carbolic acid, and strychnine.
114. Hoffman, pp.174 and 184.
115. Ibid.
116. Ibid.
117. For William Powers, who cut himself open with a pewter spoon, see AS, April 17, 1910, pp.1 and 3.
118. For Thomas Hendrickson see AS, March 1, 1911, p.7; AS, March 2, 1911, p.2; BMR.
119. Unknown man: AS, June 28, 1907, p.7; AS, June 29, 1907, p.14.
120. Hoffman, pp.174 and 184.
121. Halbwachs, pp.27-28.
122. Hoffman, pp.140 and 141.
123. Ibid., pp.18-19 and 173. Maris in his later study of suicide in Chicago noted this same phenomenon; see Maris, p.80.
124. AS, August 1914, pp.1 and 11.

- 125.Frenay, pp.110 and 112; Hoffman, p.170. It should not be noted that one of Frenay's charts does show an increase in the percentages of business failures in 1910 and 1911 for the entire state of Montana, which may or may not have been reflected in the Butte economy; see Frenay, p.188.
- 126.Hoffman firmly believed in the effects of suggestion and stated so many times in Suicide Problems. For an example of this, see p.28.
- 127.Hoffman, p.168.
- 128.AS, October 11, 1913, p.7; BMR.
- 129.BEN, November 12, 1908, p.2; BMR.
- 130.Butte Inter-Mountain, August 5, 1910, p.33; BMR.
- 131.A composite taken from city directories, local newspapers, census materials, and "The Report on Sanitary Conditions in the Mines and Community, Silver Bow County, December 1908-April, 1912" (Montana Historical Society Archives, Small Collection 89.1912).
- 132.Computed from Thirteenth Census Abstract 1910, pp.594-594.
- 133.Ibid.
- 134."Report on Sanitary Conditions," p. 134.
- 135.Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Manuscript Census for Montana, 1900 and 1910. Local newspapers were used to determine the residency status of some persons. The status of twelve persons remains unknown and were not computed into the percentages.
- 136.Maris, p.16.
- 137.Schmid, pp.10, 1-19, and 61.
- 138.AS, June 5, 1909, p.18.
- 139.AS, August 27, 1907, p.9. This is a doubtful case. It may have been either suicide or murder. The BMR identified it as a suicide.
- 140."Report on Sanitary Conditions."
- 141.Ibid.

142. Halbwachs, pp.206-207.
143. Coroner's Inquest No. 4098, regarding the suicide of George Eaton.
144. Coroner's Inquest No. 7638, Burt Riley, President of the Miner's Union, a witness at the inquest of George Ferguson.
145. AS, September 14, 1912, p.11; what Peter Tussila told a friend shortly before he shot himself.
146. AS, February 2, 1911, p.3. From the suicide note of George Goodchild.
147. AS, October 13, 1913, p.5. From the suicide note of Grace Becker.
148. See Coroner's Inquest No. 7638, as cited in footnote 142.
149. See Emmons, forthcoming book.
150. The Butte Miner, April 23, 1911, pp.1 and 4.
151. AS, January 22, 1911, p.12; BMR.
152. AS, January 3, 1912, p.5; BMR.
153. Coroner's Inquest No. 7025; BMR.
154. AS, February 1, 1912, p.6; AS, February 2, 1912, p.11; February 3, 1912, p.7; AS, February 9, 1912, p.8; AS, February 13, 1912, p.12; BMR.
155. AS, October 13, 1913, p.5; BMR.
156. For 1910-1913 Butte death rates from cirrhosis of the liver alone averaged 16.9 per 100,000 population, and at least twenty-three persons died from 1908-1913 as a result of drug abuse; BMR; BCMS:1910-1913.
157. Hoffman, p.75.

APPENDIX

Table A

Suicide Rates of 25 of the Nation's Largest 100 Cities

| <u>City & State</u> | <u>1905-1914</u> |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| San Francisco, CA | 47.3 |
| San Diego, CA | 41.6 |
| Sacramento, CA | 36.5 |
| Hoboken, NJ | 33.6 |
| St. Louis, MO | 33.1 |
| Los Angeles, CA | 32.3 |
| Oakland, CA | 31.9 |
| Springfield, IL | 30.7 |
| Denver, CO | 29.0 |
| Seattle, WA | 28.8 |
| Omaha, NB | 28.3 |
| Indianapolis, IN | 26.5 |
| Salt Lake City, UT | 25.8 |
| Pueblo, CO | 25.1 |
| Tacoma, WA | 25.0 |
| Atlantic City, NJ | 24.9 |
| Portland, OR | 24.8 |
| McKeesport, PA | 23.9 |
| Auburn, NY | 22.9 |
| Dayton, OH | 22.7 |
| Washington, D.C. | 22.3 |
| Chicago, IL | 22.0 |
| Spokane, WA | 21.8 |
| Columbus, OH | 21.8 |
| Newark, NJ | 21.8 |

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